

A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINIST INQUIRY INTO SHAME

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an inquiry into shame; in particular a reading of some women's lived experience of shame from a psychoanalytic and feminist perspective. This work also reflects critically on epistemological issues and tensions between the adoption of qualitative methods of research and psychoanalytic, feminist and post-structuralist readings of texts.

The thesis starts with an outline of its contents, a reflexive history of the research, and a brief introduction on shame. Chapters one to three review the main body of literature on shame, critically reflecting on how shame is constructed within different theoretical frameworks. This investigation begins with the work of Sigmund Freud and the different constructions of shame in Freudian metapsychology (chapter one) and continues with a review of the literature on the role of shame in social and interpsychic dynamics (chapter two). Chapter three focuses on the literature arguing for a crucial link between shame and femininity. Epistemological and methodological issues are discussed in chapters four; while chapter five provides a detailed description of how the research was carried out and of the analysis of the text. Chapters six to ten are based on in-depth semi-structured interviews on women's experience of shame. The discursive analysis investigates the ideological function of the shameful subject position within the context of the themes identified in the thematic decomposition of the interviews. The conclusion summarizes and reflects on the thesis as a whole; it also comments on some implications of the different readings of shame proposed in the thesis.

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And finally ... so spring came and the tree said to the soil, "Look soil, my branches are not bare any more - I have flowers and soon I will be covered with fruit. Everyone can see my flowers but nobody looks at you, down there. How can I thank you for the warmth you gave me during the frosty nights, or for the times when you held me steady when the storms came, or for how you fed me in silence while my branches were rattling in the wind?" And the soil said, "Maybe with the passing of time ... " Thank you David

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DEDICATION

*Dedico questa tesi, malgrado tutto, a mio padre
per avermi incoraggiato ad amare i libri
e a pensare con la mia testa.*

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AN INTRODUCTION

"Too many of us are paralysed by our histories to want to change them. In the result we perpetuate the power of those who make our histories - to make ourselves even more helpless. When that 'we' refers to those of us in institutions and academies of higher learning given to the study of social reality, our refusal to change that reality makes us collaborators in the subjugation of the powerless by bringing credibility to power.

"We do not have to be at the barricades to be revolutionaries; we do not have to be grassrootsists to be radical. To apprehend the social consequences of what we ourselves are doing and to set out to change it - merely to be traitors to our class - is in itself a revolutionary act." (Chris Mullard, 1974)

i.1 Introduction

This chapter has the function of introducing the thesis as a whole and of clarifying some of the fundamental concepts and choices of frameworks adopted in this project. This chapter is divided in two parts. The first part contains sections in which I clarify why I have chosen shame as the topic of my inquiry, which psychoanalytic framework I have chosen and why. There is also a section to outline the argument underpinning this thesis and to explain the choice of social constructionism as a method of inquiry. This will be followed by a summary of the content of the research sections, the themes and the findings, a section giving an outline of the thesis and a reflexive history of it. The second part is a brief introduction to shame, where I give

a definition of shame and clarify the main concepts behind the working model adopted in this thesis.

This thesis aims at investigating shame; in particular it aims at providing a psychoanalytic and feminist reading of women's lived experience of shame. The research carried out for this project consists in the analysis of the interviews with eighteen women about their experience of shame.

The thesis is structured in two parts: the first contains the literature review (chapters one, two and three) which provides a background for the research contained in part two (chapters six to ten). The literature review and the research are bridged by two chapters: chapter four, on methodology and epistemological discussion, and chapter five which describes how the research was carried out; in addition there is this introduction and a final chapter on conclusions.

i.2 Why shame?

There are a number of reasons why I chose to investigate shame, in particular women's experiences of shame. The most immediate and emotional reason is simply that I am a woman. I think that we all experience shame in ways that are peculiar to us as individuals - for example I am ashamed of my Italian accent - and in ways that are shared by us as members of a particular society - for example I would feel ashamed of walking in the street naked. However, I also feel that I have a specific way of feeling ashamed which is connected to my being a woman. The shame I am referring to has a more existential flavour than the specific feeling of exposure and embarrassment of the examples given above. It is a mixture of uncertainty about oneself, a sense of inadequacy, low self-esteem and pervasive shame. That this existential experience of shame is not just my lot has been confirmed by intimate

discussions with my female friends about the secret torture of a life lived under the threat of shame and self-doubt.

My experience as a psychotherapist also corroborated my suspicion that, beyond individual differences, there is something broadly shared in women's experience of shame and many of my female patients came to therapy in an attempt to find an individual solution to their crippling shame. The relevance of the analysis of shame in psychotherapy was further confirmed for me by Lewis (1974) who (also from a pattern observed in her clinical practice), had come to realize that shame in the patient-therapist relationship was a special contributor to the negative therapeutic reaction. She found that a group of patients who had terminated treatment with her, returned after a few years in even worse psychic condition than when they had originally applied for treatment. Specifically, the insights they had gained during treatment were now being used against themselves, with the addition of a vocabulary which had been increased by analysis. They had become even more self-critical than they had appeared to be at the start and their superego conflicts appeared accentuated. The area which seemed to have been worst affected was that of self-evaluation, i.e. the capacity to maintain at least a neutral self-evaluation. Lewis concluded that this was the result of the failure to properly analyze shame (Lewis 1974).

Although I agree with Lewis that it is crucial to properly analyze shame in psychotherapy, I do not believe in the possibility of finding an exclusively individualistic solution to women's shame. The wish and commitment to reach a more global understanding of women's shame which pays attention to their historical position in a patriarchal society has motivated this research.

Shame has the quality of being at the same time a very private emotion and a social experience, as in shame we see ourselves in the eyes of the other (Sartre 1943, Lewis

1971). It has been argued that shame has the crucial function of regulating the boundaries between what is public and what we want to keep private (Pines 1990). Because of this quality, shame functions as a social regulator. In particular shame is considered to play a crucial role in conformity to norms and standards which are socially acceptable in a particular society (Goffman 1959, Scheff 1990). Clearly then, this function must play a specific role in women's conformity to norms and standards in a patriarchal society.

Another reason why the investigation of shame is important for women is the link in literature and popular culture between shame and femininity. I will address these issues in detail later in this introduction and in chapter three.

i.3 A Psychoanalytic Framework: Which and Why?

A brief clarification is required on which psychoanalytic framework I have used and why. The specific psychoanalytic model I have chosen to use to investigate shame is Freudian/Contemporary Freudian. From here on I will refer to it as the psychoanalytic framework.

i.3.1 Why Freud?

Recently feminist psychotherapists, particularly those influenced by the so-called 'British School' of psychoanalysis, have neglected Freudian theory and focused instead on the role of the mother in the psychic development of the female child (Sayers, 1990). By contrast, I have chosen to focus on Freud for two main reasons: firstly, it was Freud who made a clear link between female identity and shame by

presenting women as shameful beings "*par excellence*" (1933:132). Secondly, because Freud's formulation, by drawing our attention to women's lack of a penis/phallus, places the discussion of female identity firmly within the context of a patriarchal society.

I have chosen this focus because, while acknowledging the immense contribution of post-Freudian theories to the understanding of women's psyche, I agree with the view that the focus of feminist therapy on the mother carries the risk of losing sight of the real inequalities of power, sex, race and class (Sayers, 1990). Furthermore it has been pointed out that Freud, virtually alone, took account of the way women's and men's psychology is determined by the similarities and differences of their biological and social lot (Sayers, 1986).

i.3.2 Why Psychoanalysis?

For a long time psychoanalysis was viewed as the enemy of feminism. It was argued that Freud was sexist and that he repeated cultural ideology in a form that it could be mistaken for scientific findings (Chodorow 1989, Millett 1972); that he reified the notion of man as norm and woman as 'other' (Mitchell and Rose 1982); that he proffered a highly phallogentric theory which views the penis as having a unique importance in unconscious life (Temperley 1984, Mitchell & Rose 1982), and furthermore that Freud's theory of gender, based on anatomical differences, is loaded with relations of superiority and inferiority (Chodorow 1978). These views are certainly confirmed by Freud's overall view of women, which constructs them as shameful beings, narcissistic and vain, with less sense of justice than men and with no notable contribution to make to civilization (Freud 1933).

In contrast with this circumspect regard for Freud, many feminist authors have actively defended psychoanalysis on the grounds that it offers a unique insight into the psychic reproduction of oppression (Chodorow 1978, 1980, Ernst & Maguire 1987, Dinnerstein 1978, Mitchell 1974, Eichenbaum & Orbach 1983, Oliver 1989, Sayers 1985, 1986). These authors have advocated a fundamental role for psychoanalysis in the feminist struggle, due to the fact that no other theory of socialization has been able to give a sufficiently plausible explanation of the tenacity with which women repeat their pasts and thereby perpetuate their own oppression (Chodorow 1989).

Psychoanalysis provides a theory of the organization and reproduction of sex and gender. Freudian theory in particular goes some way towards making sense of men's apparent contempt for women as the normal outcome of the masculine Oedipus complex; i.e. through their identification with their father's masculine superiority and the consequent view of women as penis-less (inferior) creatures. In this way Freud demonstrated the intertwining of psychological and social forms of gender oppression (Chodorow 1989). A similar point has been made by Eichenbaum & Orbach (1983) who stressed the importance of understanding how social practices of a given culture are transmitted to its members and how the individual internalizes the power relations, sex roles and psychodynamics of the family.

In conclusion, Freud's statement that woman is 'made', not born (Freud 1933) is pivotal to this thesis, as I take as my starting point that an analysis of shame for women must inevitably include an analysis of *how* woman is made, both internally and externally. Due to its unique contribution to the understanding of the interplay of these two worlds, psychoanalysis has been selected as theoretical framework.

i.4 My Argument

I want to argue that shame does not exist in a vacuum or 'out there', neither is it exclusively an intrapsychic affect. This immediately precludes the positivistic approach, studying shame as a thing which can be directly observed and objectively measured. It also implies critiquing the psychoanalytic view of shame as residing within persons, and deriving from their intrapsychic conflicts or personality traits.

Instead I want to look at how shame is constructed and negotiated in speech. I want to claim that the subjective position of 'shameful' is multifaceted, contradictory and constantly negotiated.

My aim in this project is to discursively analyze interviews of women's experience of shame as text in order to reveal the ideological significance of the themes operating within it, how the subject position of shameful is constructed within those themes, what function that particular subject position serves and/or what it enables women to do, and/or the rhetorical devices that are used in the construction of the shame themes.

i.5 Why Social Constructionism?

There are many reasons why, given the argument I intend to pursue, social constructionism and discourse analysis appeared as the most appropriate and fruitful methodological approaches. Here I will only briefly state some of these reasons as a full discussion of the subject is contained in chapters four and five.

Social psychology and psychoanalysis look for explanations of social phenomena inside the person, whether in terms of personality and attitudes or in terms of intrapsychic conflicts. Sociology on the other hand argues that social structures give rise to the phenomena that we see. Social constructionism rejects both these positions and focuses instead on the social practices people engage in, arguing that it is in those very social practices through which people actively construct and reconstruct reality, that we can find explanations of social behaviour (Burr, 1995).

One important implication of this shift is that it questions the possibility of a unproblematic, unbiased observation of the world, because social phenomena are viewed as historically and culturally relative, constantly in the process of being negotiated between people. In other words, people construct versions of reality through their daily interactions. Social constructionists believe that these versions of reality are constructed through language which is therefore not only our main means of communication, but also a form of social action (Potter and Wetherell 1987). These constructions of the world, however, are not purely theoretical abstractions, but each carry different implications for human beings (Burr 1995) and have crucial repercussions on the way people view and value themselves and others (Burman and Parker 1993).

i.6 The Themes

The research reported in this thesis focuses on the analysis of eighteen interviews exploring women's experience of shame. Out of these interviews I have extracted five shame themes. I will now outline the subject of each with a brief summary of the findings. The themes will be fully explored in chapters six to eleven.

The first theme, "Shame and the Ideal", looks at shame as deriving from the failure to meet an ideal. In this theme I highlight the fact that for the women interviewed, not meeting ideals had serious implications for their self-esteem and was expressed in terms of negative self-evaluation. I also explore the rhetorical devices and strategies used to construct this theme, in particular how the participants, in constructing their accounts, rely on a dualistic discourse which separates individual and society, victim and perpetrators. In this theme I illustrate first how the position of shameful is a negotiated product and second, that the subject positions made available by discourses are not equivalent, but carry different implications in terms of self-image and self-worth.

In the second theme, "Femininity and Shame", I investigate how the participants' way of accounting for their shame experiences and their positioning themselves as shameful functions as 'practical ideology' and contributes to the reproduction of female stereotypes. I illustrate how these stereotypes rest on constructions of the female body and sexuality as shameful. I found, similar to the previous theme, that the whole construction of femininity is contradictory and that women employ specific strategies to make sense of these contradictions. I suggest that these strategies are also ways in which the participants struggle at an individual level to maintain a positive self-image in the absence of alternative, more realistic discourses of the female body. I also suggest and illustrate how women construct their accounts in a way that allows them to find some space for resistance to the negative evaluation implied in patriarchal discourses.

In the theme "Defences against Shame: Withdrawal and Silence", I investigate whether women's positioning themselves as shameful also plays an ideological function. I found that often women used these accounts to avoid alternative positions of being angry, competitive or powerful. Thus positioning themselves as shameful

warrants their withdrawal from having to otherwise face a situation of conflict. I suggest that although silence and withdrawal might provide the individual women with a temporary solution to conflict, these strategies also have serious implications in terms of women's complicity in reproducing an 'acceptable', but highly limiting and self-destructive norms of behaviour for women. The following two themes develop the argument that this type of strategy might not be very successful at an individual level either.

The theme "The Shameful Self behind the Facade" looks further into self-protective strategies, particularly that of hiding behind a facade. This is presented as a strategy adopted to protect the participants from social and personal rejection; the possibility of rejection is then accounted for by positioning themselves as unlovable, shameful and inadequate. I remove this dilemma from the personal sphere and suggest a link with the social construction of woman as 'other' to man and how in the absence of a representation of her value 'per se', women might conform to roles and expectations which make them acceptable.

In the final theme "Shame of the Victim", I argue that the solutions identified in the previous themes - ultimately that women construct shame as a reflection of personal faults - have a cumulative and damaging effect for their sense of well-being and that positioning oneself as shameful is highly disempowering and debilitating. For example, I found that in event of physical or verbal attacks, the women often tended to question their perception of reality, their responsibility or complicity in the event and finally turned their anger against themselves, rather than the attacker.

i.7 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis contains ten chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction provides a summary of the contents of each chapter and a reflexive history of the thesis as a whole.

Part One contains chapters one, two and three and constitutes the literature review. This has three aims: a) to provide a historical view of the development of the concept of shame; b) to produce a multidisciplinary picture of the major contributions to the study of shame in order to clarify concepts and areas of main importance for this thesis and, c) to focus on the links between shame, feminism and psychoanalysis.

These aims stem not only from the necessity of documentation when starting a research project, but also from the wider epistemological intent of illustrating how theoretical frameworks allow us to see very different things by constructing, rather than just describing the phenomenon. This multiplicity of constructions contributes further to making shame a multifaceted and extremely complex phenomenon.

Chapter one looks at the work of Sigmund Freud on shame and guilt. It addresses the different meanings attributed to these concepts according to the three models of Freud's metapsychology. This chapter has two aims: to provide a historical picture of the development of the concepts of shame and guilt and to make the epistemological point about the constructed nature of shame. To this purpose the last section of chapter one looks at the 'hidden concept of shame in Freud', i.e. at the conceptualisation of shame that Freudian models could not explain, but were still contained there in embryonic form.

Chapter two moves away from an exclusively intrapsychic understanding of shame through formulations of shame as playing a role in social and interpsychic dynamics. Hence I review the literature on the role of shame in the 'self-other' interaction, in

motivating human behaviour, in social development and in conformity. In this chapter I also look at the other main psychoanalytic reading of shame, that of a failure of the ideal-self.

Chapter three applies the findings of the previous chapters to the specific context of women's shame in a patriarchal society. The chapter focuses on the discussion of women's shame and the theories which advocate a significant link between shame and femininity. This chapter starts with a discussion and critique of Freud's statement that shame was considered "a feminine characteristic *par excellence*" (Freud 1933:132), which attributes women's shame to their lacking a penis and continues through to Bartky (1990) who looks at women's shame as the emotional expression of 'being in the world' in a patriarchal society.

Chapter four bridges the theoretical issues raised in the preceding chapters and the actual research with an examination of the epistemological and methodological issues involved. It discusses the contributions offered to social psychology by post-structuralism and the resulting epistemological issues. In particular it looks at the use of language, both in psychoanalysis and discourse analysis, as well as investigating issues of subjectivity, power and ideology.

Chapter five picks up on issues discussed in chapter four, forming an introduction to the section on research. The chapter outlines the argument, method of analysis and also provides a summary of research questions and findings. The section on method follows the stages of the research from the design of the semi-structured interviews and the selection of the participants, through the coding of interviews, the selection and analysis of the themes, to a summary of the findings of the analysis.

Part two contains chapters six to eleven. These five chapters constitute the discourse analysis itself. Each chapter addresses a theme which recurred in the interviews and links it to broader cultural issues. In each case I provide psychoanalytic and feminist readings followed by a discursive analysis.

Chapter six looks at the theme of the ideal and its relation to shame in particular in connection to the concept of the ideal-self. In this chapter I question the exclusively intrapsychic nature of shame and look at how shame is constructed within a context.

Chapter seven looks at femininity and the construction of the female shameful subject through issues concerning the female body and female heterosexuality and looks at how stereotypes of women are constructed in speech through women positioning themselves as shameful.

Chapter eight looks at the defences (in particular withdrawal and silence), employed by women to protect themselves from shameful exposure. In this chapter I look at certain consequences entailed by adopting the position of shameful and what this allows women to do.

Chapter nine continues some of the discussion initiated in the previous chapter and looks at the dichotomy between a true self and a 'façade' self, as a strategy to protect one from feelings of shame and inadequacy. In this chapter I also look briefly at the some of the implications of adopting a modernist or post-modernist construction of the self.

Chapter ten brings together most of the issues already addressed in the previous four chapters and focuses on the disempowering implications for women of adopting the position of shameful, especially in case of attack.

Finally, the concluding chapter summarises the content of this thesis and its main findings. It also addresses again some epistemological issues involved in adopting a psychoanalytic, feminist, post-structuralist approach in attempting to challenge existing constructions of shame as a thing ‘out there’ or as an intrapsychic affect.

i.8 A Reflexive History

The start of this research on shame saw the convergence of three very important factors: my experiences as a woman, my interest in research and my profession as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. These three aspects have all contributed to my research, but have also made it an extremely difficult process.

i.8.1 I, the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

My knowledge of psychoanalysis and unconscious processes both as a therapist and as patient taught me that shame plays an extremely important role in human life both as a motivator and inhibitor. Less helpful at times was my second-nature attitude to approach any text as a reflection of the speaker’s psyche. The problematic implication of this is that what can be instrumental to the expression of a repressed voice in the consulting room, can be repressive in discourse analysis by addressing the accounts exclusively as intrapsychic and individual conflicts.

On the other hand, although working from within a post-structuralist model, I am not completely convinced that it is exclusively beneficial to lose sight of people's biographies particularly if we believe, as post-structuralists do, that we do not exist in a vacuum, but that our identities are a historically and socially negotiated product. I will look at this issue in more detail in chapter five and nine, but in terms of my reflexive history the issue of text vs biography was one that I kept struggling with, due to my dual identity of psychoanalytic psychotherapist and researcher. Part of my difficulty was due to my reluctance to relinquish my interest in the central importance of the complexities of an 'inner world' with its own system of internal relations and how this relates to intimate relations with oneself and other persons. These dimensions, however, I had to ignore when reading women's interviews as text.

i.8.2 I, the Woman

The shared belief (eg. Freud 1933, Lewis 1971, 1987, Bartky 1990) that shame has particular significance for women is confirmed by my own experience; in particular, the pervasive, underlying feeling of inadequacy, of feeling 'wrong' and a disbelief in one's capacity - in other words, the very specific form of feminine shame examined by Karen Horney (1934). However, if attempting to find a voice to a long-suppressed experience is challenging and exciting, it can also be extremely painful when the search for new instruments of research creates the same type of conflict in terms of legitimation and approval that the content is concerned with.

i.8.3 I, the Researcher

Commitment to a reflexive account has been advocated as an essential part of Feminist Standpoint Research (FSR) (Hollway 1989, Burman 1990, Gill in press) and as an aid to accountability for analysis of text as it makes public the interpretative processes involved (Potter 1988). Reflexivity generally refers to the researcher making explicit and reflecting critically upon the position from which they are theorising. Furthermore this critical reflection rests on the realisation that, "'knowledge' and the whole process of research are structured by relations of dominance around gender, race, class, age and sexuality." (Griffin 1995:120)

On the basis that the 'personal' or 'private' realm is also political, FSR also argues that a reflexive account looks at the way in which research is part of a knowledge validation process which tends to reflect the concerns of dominant groups (Griffin 1995).

Inevitably my personal history and my negotiation with power and validation processes cannot but have played a crucial role in the structuring of this thesis. I acknowledge that what I write stems from my personal beliefs and my experience as a woman. In agreement with Stanley and Wise (1993), I believe that feminism is deeply and irrevocably connected to a re-evaluation of 'the personal' and as a feminist I refuse to see it as inferior to, or even different from, 'science' (Stanley and Wise 1993:21).

Many trends can be identified within this thesis. Its multifaceted character has often felt to me like chaos. I have attempted many strategies to transform chaos into order with highly ambivalent reactions. When partly due to exhaustion I finally surrendered to its nature, I realised that some of my discomfort was caused by comparing what

had been my real experience of research to a ‘hygienic research as it is described’ (Stanley and Wise 1993:153). I then realised that, mirrored in the multifaceted nature of my thesis was the complexity of the process of writing a Ph.D which attempts to struggle with and pull together various tensions and contradictions.

Some of these pertain to the intricacies of the current philosophical debate in research and in social sciences (Henriques et al. 1984, Silverman 1993). These are represented in my thesis by the use of different methodologies: quantitative and qualitative¹; the overlap and conflict of different theoretical frameworks (positivism, post-structuralism, feminism); and explanations offered on my topic by different disciplines: psychology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology and philosophy.

Intertwined with the theoretical negotiation, my own historical and psychological negotiations played a central role in the varied and sometimes fragmented nature of this thesis.

i.8.3.1 How my ‘Fragmented’ History Affected my ‘Fragmented’ Work

My academic education took place in Italy. I moved to this country at the age of 24 with a so-called ‘classical’ or multidisciplinary education. At high-school I had studied ancient Greek literature and poetry as well as physics, chemistry and history of art. At University my first degree was in Philosophy, although I had also taken exams in Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology and Philosophy of Science. My Masters in Psychology was based on research carried out in Britain on the work of

¹ This refers to quantitative methodology used in the questionnaire study which is only referred to in this thesis.

R.D. Laing, in particular ‘The Divided Self’ and therapeutic communities. I then trained as a Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist in London.

My desire to enrol for a Ph.D stemmed from this fragmented identity and my inquisitive nature. Having started my studies in a purely theoretical area, I moved progressively towards the clinical/practical. I wanted to reconcile these sides of myself. I wanted to investigate further the theoretical and philosophical foundations of my clinical work, while at the same time exploring how theory is negotiated and affects people’s lives in practice. This I had hoped to achieve through research for my Ph.D.

When I arrived at University College London, I had no experience of a British academic institution and was unaccustomed to the tendency for specialisation. The whole of my work was carried out while registered in the Department of Psychology at UCL. This department excels in its contribution to empirical, positivist psychological research, with the belief in a ‘unitary and cohesive self’ at the very core of it. This has, at times, presented some difficulties in terms of the validation of alternative types of research and has given rise to a political polarization within the department. I was personally affected by this situation in many ways.

The first, and perhaps most difficult to deal with, was the clash of my personal ‘*weltanschauung*’ with that of the department, which at first I was quite unaware of and experienced as a feeling of deep personal inadequacy. Fundamentally, I spoke foreign languages: Italian while in Britain and the language of the unconscious where rationality and intellect had validity. I was a woman in a male-dominated institution. I had a fragmented/multidisciplinary self where cohesion and specialisation was the norm. I felt exposed, inadequate, different and often ashamed.

Partly due to ignorance and partly out of desire for self-protection, my first reaction was to look for allies. I enrolled in the Psychoanalytic Unit at UCL which at least allowed me to share one of my otherwise 'foreign languages'. However, this presented me with another contradiction: the fact that the Psychoanalysis Unit was part of the empirically based Psychology Department was given as the justification for the necessity in research for conventional empirical evidence. This implied that while all the students of the unit were studying to a large degree unconscious phenomena, we had to translate our hypotheses into the foreign language of specific quantities and percentages, predictability, replicability. Despite my desire to investigate specifically women's experience of shame, out of the need for 'neutrality and objectivity', I was firmly requested to also investigate shame in men.

I will not address the considerable practical and epistemological difficulties this involved, I only want to highlight how the resulting disempowerment and confusion was experienced by the group (all women with a male supervisor, hence with an inbuilt gendered hierarchy of power which was never questioned or discussed), as personal failure and often despair. The power battle for authority and validation between the department and the unit, between male supervisor and female students was individually negotiated. Stanley and Wise (1993:153) stress the great vulnerability of women researchers, how this pressures on them to conform and how often failing to conform to ideal standards is experienced as personal inadequacy. More than ever I could understand the experiences of shame described by the women I interviewed who, like myself and my fellow students, attempted individually to find a solution to a shame which is socially/interpersonally constructed.

i.8.3.2 The Search for a Method

My strategy involved using a questionnaire to explore the various dimensions of shame and the difference between shame and guilt. What is now obvious to me is that the questionnaire was the best 'compromise formation' I could find at the time. Unfortunately, like symptoms or dreams, the compromise often describes the conflict but does not successfully resolve it. As a consequence, I found myself exploring shame through a questionnaire which, although based on psychoanalytic literature, could not address any of the unconscious aspects of shame nor explore the inter-subjective and psychodynamic construction of it.

A few years after I started as a part-time Ph.D student my initial supervisor retired. Apart from one student who in the meantime had completed her Ph.D, all the other students dropped out. The group disintegrated and silently we went our own ways; our feelings of loss were never addressed. It was a time of great crisis for me. I had completed the questionnaire study, carried out a pilot study, designed the semi-structured interviews and carried them out with eighteen women and (grudgingly) with three men.

In other words, I was half-way along my journey, having learned and adjusted to the situation and the rules. I was determined not to give up and I was extremely anxious at having to start a whole new negotiation with a new supervisor. Much time was spent preparing myself for the necessity of having to abandon many firmly held beliefs in order to complete my Ph.D. Luckily this was largely avoided upon my acceptance into another group: again all women (but this time including the supervisor).

This new group was open to the discussion of feminism and was addressing head-on issues of methodology. The structure helped in many ways: I didn't have to justify being a feminist or wanting to explore exclusively women's experience of shame.

The additional factor that all the women, including the supervisor, were able to validate my understanding of shame from their own experience of it as women was certainly a source of great comfort and support². I was encouraged to salvage the work I had done, but also to explore what methodology I ideally wanted to adopt to analyze the data. This explains why although the semi-structured interviews were designed with predictions and numbers in mind (see Appendix four and five) the planned content analysis was never carried out.

Instead I read, analyzed, coded and re-read the transcripts many times over in the process described in detail in chapter five. I finally came to the decision to use a discursive analysis. As will become clear in chapter five, I admit to being a beginner, still grappling with some of the difficulties involved. Other issues also interfered with my analysis of the text; I often failed to make certain crucial connections between myself and the text.

For instance, when I went back to my first draft of analysis, I realised that although I reiterated that I was using a psychoanalytic framework, I neglected to say that *I* was a psychotherapist and that the majority of my interviewees knew that. Why was I hiding and denying my psychoanalytic self? Having to ask myself this question gave me a much deeper insight into the research process. I realised I was trying to use the 'right' language, to say the 'right' things - in other words, I was aspiring to a positivistic notion of objectivity. Resorting to accredited and established criteria, I was attempting to contain my anxieties in the uncertain journey of my research. (This

² I am not implying however, the existence of a unitary 'woman's experience'; not in our group, nor among women in general. In fact, I think that the uncritical assumption of such a thing feeds into the fantasy that one might have a privileged understanding of women's fundamental experiences simply by being a woman, at the risk of neglecting differences of class, race, sexual orientation etc. (see ch. four for further discussion)

also brought to my attention the possibility that the participants may have felt under similar pressures to say 'the right things').

Phillida Salmon speaks of the Ph.D author as the "pioneer within this new landscape" (Salmon 1994:9). I often felt like a pioneer without a compass. At times I felt excited and energetic, at others despairing and exhausted. I often cursed myself for having even started the journey. The process felt, as very aptly described by Salmon as "a long, chaotic, often seemingly fruitless inner struggle, in which no one can help and for which there is no guaranteed outcome..." (Salmon 1994:15)

Having so much investment in the outcome was, at times, the greatest hindrance. The subject of the thesis itself was certainly very alive for me, as I was constantly confronted by the awareness of my shame as a result of comparing my work with that of others and feeling different and inadequate. This is why the moment of 're-making the link' with what is the source of the shame can be liberating, powerful and can produce 'new ideals' and feelings of pride. It is in this respect that I looked at my work and I have drawn some conclusions.

The first reflection focuses on wider epistemological issues. From the turn of the century there has been great interest in the social factors - both within and without the scientific community - that shape scientific changes and determine the success of one scientific theory over another (see, for instance, Feyerabend 1975). This unprecedented approach has developed within the critique of science into an innovative and potentially revolutionary view of scientific progress. The main shift hinges on looking at scientific concepts as mediated social products. It has been argued that a science separate from the social environment is as impossible to conceptualise as a social environment separate from people's thought, which

nonetheless people inevitably incorporate into their thoughts (Sohn-Rethel 1975, Diamond 1986).

Although I had rationally believed and absorbed this way of thinking, I still felt uneasy looking at the fragmented nature of my work; I realised that I had expected myself to go through such changes and negotiations and yet remain untouched by it all. Or perhaps I expected that somehow my work could and should stay untouched by what was happening to me, if it were to be 'truly scientific'. Furthermore, despite my fascination with philosophy of science and the belief in what it taught me, I discovered I had an underlying, ingrained belief in positivism and the existence of a 'method' which stood out there, separate from the practice of it and the social circumstances which had generated it. Feyerabend (1975) describes science and its methods as the new religion in Western society and certainly I approached it as such. My experience, because it has implied enormous adjustment, has faced me with contradictions which under easier circumstance I perhaps would not have had to face and reflect upon. My choice of method has been a constantly negotiated product, between different parts and languages in myself and environmental pressures and beliefs.

The other point of consideration, which reflects the fragmented nature of research, is the fragmented/multiple nature of myself as researcher, psychotherapist, woman. My work has been a learning process of negotiation within that fragmentation. I started by hiding and denying it and to a certain extent continued to do so in different measures. I then began to examine it and to view it as complexity rather than chaos and finally I am starting to value it. In Diamond's words: "Useful as it may be as an analytic construct, there is never a wholly consistent social/mental reality. It is that lack of total consistency that creates political openings for us." (Diamond 1987:9)

In spite of these insights, I do not wish to fall into abstract idealism; It must be acknowledged that the failure or success of a Ph.D thesis has enormous repercussions for the researcher and that the investment in it is bound to be reflected in the level of conformity present in the text. The complex negotiations and the painful emotional process involved in doing research have constituted the main lessons I have learnt in writing this thesis.

i.9 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO SHAME.

This section provides a brief introduction to shame with the aim of providing a definition of the word and a clarification of the concepts at the basis of the working model of shame adopted in this thesis.

i.9.1 Defining Shame

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the following definition of shame: "Painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonouring, ridiculous or indecorous in one's conduct or circumstances or of being in a situation which offends one's modesty."

Shame has also been described as an irrational, primitive, wordless reaction, experienced largely 'visually' and through autonomic activity (Lewis 1978).

Certainly there is total agreement in the existing literature that shame is a distressing feeling (Freud 1900, Goldberg 1957, Lewis 1971, Pines 1987); that it is an early and prominent affect in human experience (Lear 1987, Scheff 1990, Yorke 1988); and that, generally speaking, it involves a perception of what is improper or disgraceful (Lewis 1971).

The word shame derives from a Germanic root *skam/skem* (Old High German *skama*, Anglo-Saxon *scamu*), meaning 'sense of shame, being shamed, also *schande*, meaning disgrace. This can be traced back to the Indo-European root *kam/kem*: 'to cover, to veil, to hide'; the prefixed 's' (*skam*) adds the reflexive meaning: 'to cover oneself'. This can also be seen in the Old High German *sceme*, 'cover' or 'mask'.

‘It was as if I wore a mask’ is a metaphor often used to describe shame experiences (Wumser 1981). This is consistent with the fact that covering oneself is a natural expression of shame and that hiding is a spontaneous reaction to shame (Freud 1900, M.Lewis 1992).

The experience of shame can be triggered by a number of different situations, however in most cases, it seems to involve exposure in circumstances where the subject is perceived as weak and failing, dirty or defective (both physically and psychologically) and/or having lost control (either in terms of feelings or body functions) (Wumser 1981).

i.9.2 The Shame Family of Feelings

A number of affective states have been related to shame, some being used almost interchangeably with it, while others have been considered as more distinct, both popularly and academically. For example: embarrassment, humiliation, and modesty (Lewis 1971, Darwin 1904); shyness (Lewis 1978, Wumser 1981); feelings of inferiority (Gilligan, 1976), low self-esteem, a sense of degradation (Wumser 1981); narcissistic mortification (Gilbert 1976); being outcast and helpless (Cooley 1922); ridicule and chagrin (Lewis 1971). Collectively, these affective states have been called ‘the shame family’ (Lewis 1971) and all are considered to express some element of shame, with variation in the object, aim, intensity of the affective experience (Morrison, 1989).

It is very difficult to clearly differentiate between the feelings listed above. This is for two main reasons. The first reason is that, in common parlance, some feelings may be referred to interchangeably with shame, while others describe the experience

of shame under specific circumstances. The difference between embarrassment, humiliation and self-consciousness might help to illustrate this point.

Embarrassment, is considered to be a mild form of shame proper (Wumser 1981), and is associated with loss of face, occurring when an individual is 'caught out' in an interaction, i.e. inadvertently revealing to another something which should stay hidden. The same feeling can be evoked by witnessing another person being thus 'caught out'.

Humiliation is believed to be a strong form of that described above and humiliation itself is a shame inducing situation (Lewis 1971). Humiliation specifically reflects the social and interpersonal as well as the internalised representation of the 'humiliator' (Morrison, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987). Although humiliation is taken to be the manifestation of shame (in this case the product of action perpetrated against the self), it does not require the actual external action for humiliation to be experienced, as it is often the effect of the internalised, attacking objects (Morrison, 1989). Disgrace, dishonour, degradation and debasement are terms closely related to, if not largely synonymous with, humiliation (Wumser 1981).

Embarrassment, like humiliation, is a manifestation of shame in a social context and although it is less intense than humiliation, it always requires an 'embarrasser' and underscores the special relationship of seeing and being seen (Morrison 1989). Goffman (1967) considered embarrassment to play a crucial role in the regulation of interactions between people.

Self-consciousness describes an accentuated state of awareness of the self, accompanied by the assumption that the same exaggerated amount of attention is

being paid to one's person by others (Reich 1960, Tomkins 1963, Kaufman 1989). This is a particularly intense form of anxiety, mostly internalized (Wumser 1981).

The definitions of humiliation, embarrassment and self-consciousness show some of the subtleties of the experience of shame and how the shame family of feelings describe different emotional states but also have areas of overlap. For example, while self-consciousness and embarrassment are mainly experienced in social situations, humiliation can be experienced in isolation. Also embarrassment is often used synonymously with shame, while there are aspects of the experience of humiliation which are not related to shame. Therefore one could experience shame in a situation which does not involve humiliation.

The other difficulty in differentiating between the shame family of feelings is that their use in language is much more fluid than in academic definitions. Two people might use the same word to mean very different things and use different words to describe very similar experiences. This is why, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter five, having started the research interviews with an invitation to describe an experience of shame, I took the participant's account to be a description of shame even though they might be describing an experience involving, for example, humiliation or inadequacy.

This point is particular relevant where feelings of inferiority and decreased self-esteem are concerned. These feelings, often associated with shame, have been considered an expression of a discrepancy between self-expectations and self-experience (Wumser 1981, Piers and Singer 1953). They lead to shame only if other characteristics of shame, eg. elements of exposure and rejection, are associated with them. Gilbert (1994) has postulated an important link between shame and

inferiority/powerlessness as expressions of subordination as means of avoiding possible attack.

Inferiority feelings and low self-esteem are not necessarily synonymous with shame and yet seem to play a significant role in women's experience of shame, as will be examined in greater detail later.

i.9.3 The Observable Shame

The body gestures and attitude typical to the experience of shame include: the head bowed, closed eyes, covering of the face, the body curved in on itself making the person as small as possible. In contrast to this apparent desire to 'crawl through a hole' or 'sink through the floor' (Lewis 1971), the shamed person has to deal with an excess of autonomic stimulation (blushing, sweating, increased heart rate etc.), which conspires to draw attention precisely when one wishes to hide (Ekman 1982, 1983). This flood of sensations can be so powerful that it has been likened to an 'implosion of the self' (Laing 1960), and can literally hinder ego functioning (Lewis 1971).

The gross bodily arousal which heightens the intensity and painfulness of the affective experience, can make shame reverberate over a period of time (Lewis 1971). This is an important factor contributing to the power of the experience of shame, making it particularly difficult to overcome even after the passing of months or even years.

This observation leads directly to an examination of shame as anxiety, based on past experiences of ‘undischarged or bypassed shame’ (Lewis 1971, Wumser 1981, Scheff 1990). The sudden nature of its onset (Freud 1900, Lewis 1978, Wumser 1981), may also increase the anxiety of finding oneself suddenly out of control, adding to the pre-existing experience of helplessness stored up unconsciously. Wumser (1981) listed various defences employed to cope with shame: clowning, narcissistic imagery in the form of grandiosity or idealization, depersonalization, lying, masochistic flaunting of degradation, passive humiliation turned into active humiliation of others (externalization). Conflict can also be internalized through introjection i.e. ‘I take into myself the judgement and punishment by others’. Displacement might also be employed.

i.9.4 The Causes of Shame: Reaction-formation and the Ideal-self

Psychoanalytic literature refers to two main causes of shame: Shame functioning as reaction-formation and shame due to having failed to realize one’s ideal-self. The two types of shame will be explored in more detail in the next two chapters where the epistemological implications of the two will be investigated; here I will only give a brief definition of the two.

A reaction-formation has been defined as a psychological attitude or habitus diametrically opposing a repressed wish and constituted as a reaction against it: eg. bashfulness countering sexual and exhibitionistic tendencies (Laplanche and Pontalis 1985).

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the view of shame as reaction-formation began with Freud and has subsequently filtered through the psychoanalytic literature.

Shame, like some personality traits, is the antithesis of childhood sexual activity in which the subject has taken pleasure during the first period of so-called 'childhood immorality' (Freud 1896). On similar lines, others hold that any form of shame is a derivation of sexual shame, voyeurism and exhibitionistic wishes (Abraham, 1913, Nurberg 1955) and that shame is the servant of morality (Freud, Anna Freud 1963, Nurberg 1932, Jacobson 1954). This is supported by many references in literature of the word shame to sexual parts and sexuality.³ Prohibition against exhibitionism drives the ego to create a shame feeling which obliterates the awareness of forbidden wishes.

It is important to bear in mind that in this formulation, shame's significance lies in its psychological function, not in its experienced content. The negative statements about the self are not taken to be true statements of self-evaluation, but are taken instead to be psychic decoys that divert a person away from exhibitionism.

The opposite happens with shame experiences explained in terms of the self, where the negative statements in shame are taken to be true statements of self-evaluation, as is the case when shame is the affect deriving from the failure to live up to one's ideals (Sandler *et al.* 1963, Lewis 1971). There is agreement on how low self-esteem is correlated to conflicts in the self-representation (Sandler 1986, Pines 1987, Lewis 1971, Wumser 1981, Silberstein *et al.* 1987) and more specifically, how loss of self-esteem derives from a discordancy between wishful self-images and a self that

³ For example one obsolete meaning of shame is "the privy parts or parts of shame". The Bible (Rev.XVI) says: "Lest he walk naked and they see his shame." The word 'pudenda' stems from the Latin *pudere*, to be ashamed. Similarly, the German word for genitals is *shamteile*, which shares a similar etymology as the word shame, discussed above. The connection is also observed in the English word 'modesty', which means both 'a low estimate of oneself' and 'observing the proprieties of sex' (Lewis 1978).

appears to be failing, defective, inferior, weak and contemptible by comparison (Lewis, 1971). These conflicts are apt to evoke feelings of inferiority and shame (Sandler 1986, Wumser 1981).

i.9.5 The Shame Scenario

I want to conclude this section by giving the working definition of shame that I will be using in this thesis. Because shame is a very complex and multilayered experience, I find the idea of a shame scenario more useful than a single definition, as it looks at the shame experience as a whole, as well as the multiple facets of it. This is my working model of what shame is:

- Shame is a complex emotional state and a variety of feelings belong to the shame experience and can be used to describe its different gradations and qualities (e.g. embarrassment, humiliation, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem). Additionally, shame is seldom experienced in isolation but is accompanied by many other feelings such as anger, depression, anxiety.
- The shame affect is traumatic, although to varying degrees and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating. Shame is often accompanied by powerful physiological reactions.
- A shame experience has a reason and a cause. By 'reason' it is meant the specific event which triggered the reaction of shame. By 'cause' it is meant the intrapsychic conflict from which shame stems.

- The experience of shame requires an audience, as suggested by the multiple references in shame to exposure and hiding. However there is no consensus on whether the presence of a 'shaming' internal audience is sufficient to provoke shame or that the presence of external audience is essential for this to take place.
- The shame experience can be remembered for a long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with virtually the same intensity. This has led to shame being discussed in terms of 'shame anxiety', based on the accumulation of shameful experiences.
- Different coping strategies and/or defences are employed to deal with shame. Reparation to the emotional damage is made, in reality or fantasy, by gaining acceptance. As in the case of audience, there is no agreement on whether the acceptance by internal objects is sufficient.

The 'shame scenario' underpins the section in the semi-structured interviews which focuses on the experience of shame (see Appendix 1,2,3 for more details) and the analysis of the interviews (see in particular the analysis of an extract from Rita in ch.11).

i.10 Conclusions

This chapter is divided in two parts: In the first I have summarised the content of the theses as a whole. I have also clarified why I have chosen shame as the topic of my inquiry and which psychoanalytic framework I have chosen and why. I have outlined the my central argument and explained the choice of social constructionism as a method of inquiry. I have then summarised the content of the research sections, the

themes and the findings; I have given an outline of the thesis and a reflexive history of it. In the second part, I have given a brief introduction to shame, defined it and clarified the main concepts behind the working model of shame adopted in this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Work of Sigmund Freud on Shame and Guilt

1.0 Introduction

Psychoanalytic theories of shame originate from the work of Sigmund Freud, which forms the logical starting point for its examination. This chapter attempts to follow the development of the concept of shame in Freud's work through the development of Freudian metapsychology. It is here that we will find the origin of what can possibly be considered as the two, exclusively intrapsychic, types of shame: that of reaction-formation and that of the ideal-self. There is a commonly held belief that Freud adhered to the former concept, however, I propose to examine the evidence for the latter type of shame as well. It is therefore argued that it is inaccurate to talk of a single Freudian theory of shame.

It is also in this chapter that an epistemological inquiry into shame begins. In agreement with Diamond (1986), I believe that theories allow us to see certain things at the expense of others which are obscured or made invisible. Freud's theory of shame offers an invaluable example of this.

Freud's metapsychology is divided into three phases: the Affect-Trauma Model, the Topographical Model and the Structural Model. The first phase can be thought of as ending in 1897, the second as lasting from 1897 to 1923 and the third from 1923 to



Freud's death in 1939. As Freud's concept of shame developed and changed during these three phases, it is necessary to begin with a brief description each.

1.1 The Affect-Trauma Model

In 1885, in collaboration with Joseph Breuer, Freud published 'Studies on Hysteria'. In this work, the patient's symptoms were regarded as the manifestation, in disguised form, of emotional forces which had been dammed up and held back by some form of pressure. Symptoms arose when a quantity of emotional energy, too great to be assimilated, was forced away from consciousness (repressed) and had to find an indirect expression. The causes were considered to be real traumatic experiences. The memories and emotions associated with these experiences were, in neurotic patients, unacceptable to their normal standards of morality and conduct and therefore could not be absorbed or discharged in a normal way. The proposed 'talking cure' consisted of bringing memories into consciousness cathartically in order to release the affects.

In this model, the mental apparatus functions as a regulator for adaptation to demands from both internal and external sources (although in this phase adaptation to external reality is emphasized), to maintain a 'steady state' (homeostasis) in the face of constant disturbance. The concept of conflict then, is seen as a source of disequilibrium and the resulting defences, as particular adaptive manoeuvres of the mental apparatus.

Other key functions performed by the mental apparatus are the control and discharge of excitation and that of defence against distressing affects and 'incompatible' ideas -

those which are rejected as being unacceptable to the conscious standards, beliefs and wishes of the individual. This is very important with regard to shame.

If the energy and the associated ideas are experienced as incompatible or threatening to the ego, in order to protect consciousness, the ego employs the basic defence of repression. This consists of 'pushing away' unacceptable ideas and associated emotions, so that these are relegated to the unconscious part of the apparatus.

Another key defence is that of substitution. This consists of the displacement of a certain affect from an 'incompatible idea' to one which can be tolerated in consciousness. For instance, in the case Freud reported of a girl who reproached herself for absurd things when underneath she felt guilt and shame for her secret masturbation (in Lewis 1978).

Freud argued that it was important to distinguish between current traumas - those which represent a relatively immediate response to a real situation or event - and retroactive traumas, which differ in their time relation to the significant environmental event. The latter stem from events which, although exciting, were not experienced as traumatic at the time of their occurrence, eg. sexual seductions.

A retroactive trauma consists of the apparatus being overcome by a combination of the revived excitement of the past and strong affective reactions such as shame, disgust, self-reproach and anxiety. A state of conflict arises, because what had previously been acceptable now assumes a different significance and represents something which is unacceptable to the person's current standards of morality and conduct.

1.1.1 Shame in the Affect-Trauma Phase

The first observation in a study of shame in Freudian theory, is how it starts from being quite a central concept in the initial phase and then slowly loses this role to become, in the Structural Model, not even a concept in its own right, but synonymous with guilt.

This shift was due largely to a change in focus from the ‘interpsychic’ to the ‘intrapsychic’ functioning of the human mind. That is, in Freud’s early work, the psyche is studied in its exchange with the external world, whereby external events become the direct causes of pathology. After the abandonment of the first phase, his view of the human mind becomes gradually more isolated and its working is understood increasingly in intrapsychic terms.

In the Affect-Trauma phase Freud talked about shame in two specific contexts. Firstly, as a central component of the trauma, which is considered as the symptom’s primary cause. This is exemplified in the following extract, from ‘Psychotherapy of Hysteria’ in "On Hysteria" (1895). In it Freud talked of shame and disgust as retroactive traumas. He does not yet clearly differentiate, as he will do in the topographical model, between shame as part of a traumatic experience which has to undergo repression itself to protect the ego and shame as the repressing force:

"[...] I had to overcome a psychical force in the patients which was opposed to the pathogenic ideas becoming conscious (being remembered). [...] What kind of force could one suppose was operative here, and what motive could have put it into operation? I could easily form an opinion on this. For I already had at my disposal a few examples of ideas that were pathogenic, and had been forgotten and put out of consciousness. *From these I recognized a universal characteristic of such ideas: they were all of a distressing nature,*

calculated to arouse the affects of Shame, of self-reproach and of psychical pain, and the feeling of being harmed; they were all of a kind that one would prefer not to have experienced, that one would rather forget. From all these arose, as it were automatically, the thought of defence." (emphasis added: Freud 1895:268-269)

Secondly, shame was understood as a defence, already directly connected to sexuality. In 'Draft K. The Neuroses of Defence' from "Extracts from the Fliess Papers" Freud clearly talked about shame this way:

"[...] There is a normal trend towards defence - that is, an aversion to directing psychical energy in such a way that unpleasure results. [...] We shall be plunged deep into psychological riddles if we enquire into the origin of the unpleasure which seems to be released by premature sexual stimulation and without which, after all, a repression cannot be explained. The most plausible answer will appeal to the fact that shame and morality are the repressing forces and that the neighbourhood in which the sexual organs are naturally placed must inevitably arouse disgust along sexual experiences. Where there is no shame (as in a male person), or where no morality comes about (as in the lower classes of society), or where disgust is blunted by the conditions of life (as in the country) there too no repression and therefore no neurosis will result from sexual stimulation in infancy. (emphasis added: Freud 1896:221-222)

Generally speaking, in this phase, Freud considered shame to be a deeply painful feeling which is either avoided or used to avoid unacceptable, painful memories. Shame is either repressed as retroactive trauma or used defensively as a repressive tool.

And yet the accompanying feelings seem to draw our attention to the complexity of what Freud is describing. In one case shame is listed together with morality and disgust, while in other places he links it with defences and psychic pain. It would seem that he was describing two different types of shame or perhaps shame in terms of its causes and its function as defence.

Additionally it can be argued that there is a third way in which Freud talked of shame, or at least of shame as we understand it now in the light of recent understanding of the self and narcissism. Those are the instances when Freud in talking of 'self-reproach' seemed to be describing feelings which today we would consider as belonging to the shame Family. Lewis (1971) argued that when such instances were taken into account, it became clear that shame was an important affect for Freud, even central to his aetiology of hysteria.

For example, in 'Studies on Hysteria' (1893-1895) Breuer and Freud had assigned to 'mortification' (a member of the shame family), a central role in symptom formation. Breuer and Freud described hysteria as the result of 'strangled affect'. The hysterical symptom they said, was the mnemonic symbol of an unbearable affect. Any experience which elicits distress - fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain - can be regarded as traumatic. Shame, then, was specifically included in the first list of traumatic affects (Lewis, 1971).

In 'Studies on Hysteria' there are several references to shame: in the case of Anna O., in that of the Swiss servant girl Katharina, in the case of Caecilie and in the case of Miss Lucy R., the English governess (Lewis 1971). The latter in particular shows interesting connections which Freud did not develop. For instance, Lucy describes her shame as resulting from an inequality of status, i.e. inferiority. She also describes the mortification of unrequited love and more generally feelings which nowadays would

be categorised as shame anxiety (Lewis 1971). None of these experiences can be described in terms of reaction-formation in the way that Freud understood shame.

In summary, Lewis states that her re-examination of Freud's case material with a focus on shame, suggests that he considered shame as an important factor in the genesis of symptoms. In the case of hysteria, the patients were coping with overt, unidentified shame. Lucy R. was coping with the mortification of unrequited love. Dora was coping with the humiliated fury evoked by being personally betrayed. In the case of the Rat Man, by-passed shame could be identified in connection with each outbreak of obsessional symptoms (Lewis 1971).

1.2 The Topographical Model

With the topographical model, Freud's attention shifted from external events to internal forces. This phase of theorising started with the abandonment of the hypothesis of actual childhood sexual seduction. Trauma was now seen in terms of resulting harm to individuals having been hurt, rejected or punished to an intolerable degree (perceived threat of castration or of loss of parental love). Conflict was seen as arising from the discrepancy between the urge to gratify instinctual wishes on the one hand and the threat of being traumatically overwhelmed on the other.

In this phase both normal and pathological processes are described in terms of internal psychological (intrapsychic) adaptation to the pressure and demands of the drives. Dreams, daydreams, symptoms, character traits, works of art are regarded as compromise-formations between the instinctual wish and all the forces which opposed instinctual gratification.

The second phase was described as the 'Topographical Model' because of the division of the mind into three systems, arranged in layers: the unconscious being the deepest, followed by the preconscious and the conscious on the surface; the names of the first two indicating their relationship to the third. Boundaries were thought to exist between these systems. At times of relative psychic equilibrium the dividing lines must be regarded as being blurred, while at times of conflict the systems are sharply defined. The concept of defence was intimately linked to the idea that these boundaries had the function of censorship. Censorship is seen as functioning to protect consciousness from the awareness of those instinctual wishes which would represent a threat if they were permitted surface expression. This censorship takes place completely outside consciousness.

1.2.1 Shame in the Topographical Model

It follows from the above concept of boundaries and censorship in the form of repression, that shame was to play a central role in this phase. Freud stated clearly in the 'Three Essays on Sexuality', the repressive forces are "disgust, shame and morality." This is elaborated in following three quotes from the first essay, 'The Sexual Aberrations':

"[...] This is especially so where (as, for instance, in cases of licking excrement or of intercourse with dead bodies) the sexual instinct goes to astonishing lengths in successfully overriding the resistances of shame, disgust, horror or pain." (Freud 1905:161)

"Our study of the perversions has shown us that the sexual instinct has to struggle against certain mental forces which act as resistances, and of which shame and disgust are the most prominent. It is permissible to suppose that

these forces play a part in restraining that instinct within the limits that are regarded as normal." (Freud 1905:162)

"[...]The character of hysterics shows a degree of sexual repression in excess of the normal quantity, and intensification of resistance against the sexual instinct (which we have already met with in the form of shame, disgust and morality)..." (Freud 1905:164)

Again the function of shame is clarified in the second essay 'Infantile Sexuality'. This is also where the function of shame as reaction-formation is introduced and explained:

"It is during this period of total or only partial latency that are built up the mental forces which are later to impede the course of the sexual instinct and, like dams, restrict the flow - disgust, feelings of shame and the claims of aesthetic and moral ideals. [...] in reality this development is organically determined and fixed by heredity, and it can occasionally occur without any help at all from education.

With this statement Freud clarifies his construction of shame as an exclusively intrapsychic phenomenon. This construction, rooted in biological determinism, excludes the external world from having any relevant influence beyond that already prescribed by biology.

"Education will not be trespassing beyond its appropriate domain if it limits itself to following the lines which have already been laid down organically and to impressing them somewhat more clearly and deeply." (Freud 1905:177-178)

This epistemological approach leads Freud to view shame as the result of opposing reacting impulses and the formulation of shame in terms of reaction formation:

"Reaction formation and sublimation

[...] the sexual impulses cannot be utilized during these years of childhood, since the reproductive functions have been deferred - a fact which constitutes the main feature of the period of latency. On the other hand, these impulses would seem in themselves to be perverse - that is to arise from erotogenic zones and to derive their activity from instincts which, in view of the direction of the subject's development, can only arouse unpleasurable feelings. They consequently evoke opposing mental forces (reacting impulses) which, in order to suppress this unpleasure effectively, build up the mental dams that I have already mentioned - disgust, shame and morality." (Freud 1905:177-178)

This is reiterated in the same essay:

" There is consequently little resistance towards carrying them out, since the mental dams against sexual excesses - shame, disgust and morality - have either not yet been constructed at all or are only in course of construction, according to the age of the child." (Freud 1905:191)

Freud's formulation of what a human being is and what motivates human action has very important consequences. First Freud constructs human beings as self-enclosed, self-energized entities. The male individual is the focus of attention and action, in line with the subject of the Enlightenment. Second, as a consequence of the first point, the function of the object is primarily to act as a vehicle to satisfy the instinctual drives. The object therefore has no role to play in the formation of identity and subjectivity. Finally, from the abandonment of the affect-trauma model and in

particular in the topographical model, the influence of the external world is reduced to its bare minimum. When some attention is paid to societal influences, Freud always resorts to a dichotomy between the individual striving for self-gratification and society which limits and frustrates these desires.

These considerations in turn justify the commonly held belief that in Freudian theory, shame was exclusively considered within the reaction-formation (Pines 1987, Piers and Singer 1953, Lewis 1971), and that only when psychoanalysis became interested in concepts of self and narcissism, could shame also include feelings of humiliation, inadequacy and lowered self-esteem. However, I want to argue that those dimensions were already present in Freud's early theorising. The following dream, for example, which Freud analyses in terms of conflicts around sexuality and exhibitionism, could also be read as a case of narcissistic mortification in which the dreamer's experience of himself changes from that of feeling powerful and self-satisfied, to that of paralysis at finding himself exposed.

"I was very incompletely dressed and was going upstairs from a flat on the ground floor to a higher storey. I was going up three steps at a time and was delighted at my agility. Suddenly I saw a maid-servant coming down the stairs - coming towards me, that is. I felt ashamed and tried to hurry, and at this point the feeling of being inhibited set in: I was glued to the steps and unable to budge from the spot.

The feeling of shame at not being completely dressed is no doubt of a sexual nature" (Freud 1900:239)

This is reiterated later on where he describes a feeling of shame arising from a 'defect' (i.e. an inadequacy or inferiority) 'in the dreamer's toilet', rather than from unacceptable instinctual drives. A few lines later we read: "[...] nakedness is often replaced by some break of the dress regulations." (Freud 1900:242-243) That is,

rather than being actually naked, the dreamer's shame stems from a mere irregularity in his dress, which the onlookers have failed to even notice. Freud would seem to imply that the dreamer's anxiety stems from being seen in an inferior, inadequate state.

There seem to be no doubt that Freud was clear that these dreams were about exhibitionistic drives and shame as the repressive tool of censorship. And yet I would argue that Freud was also struggling with another sort of shame which could not find expression in his theory. He continues:

"[...] One of my friends has drawn my attention to the following passage in Gottfried Keller's 'Der Grune Heinrich': 'I hope, my dear Lee, that you may never learn from your own personal experience the peculiar and piquant truth of the plight of Odysseus when he appeared, naked and covered with mud, before the eyes of Nausicaa and her maidens! Shall I tell you how that can happen? Let us look into our example. If you are wandering about in a foreign land, far from your home and from all that you hold dear, if you have seen and heard many things, have known sorrow and care, and are wretched and forlorn, then without fail you will dream one night that you are coming near to your home; you will see it gleaming and shining in the fairest colours and the sweetest, dearest and most beloved forms will move towards you. *Then suddenly you will become aware that you are in rags, naked and dusty. You will be seized with a nameless shame and dread, you will seek to find covering and to hide yourself, and you will awake bathed in sweat.* This, so long as men breath, is the dream of the unhappy wanderer; and Homer has evoked the picture of the plight from the deepest and eternal nature of man.'(Freud 1900:247)

In this passage we have a very clear description of the function of shame as reaction-formation: we have a situation of conflict between unconscious exhibitionistic impulses (considered by Freud as sexual instincts, by definition innate and present since very early childhood) which press for expression in the dream and a reaction of the second system which represses these impulses by accompanying their evocation with the very distressing feeling of shame.

The depth of Freud's understanding of shame is striking, despite the common belief that he never properly investigated shame as an independent affect. Here we find a quite clear description of the phenomenology of shame, the defences employed to deal with it and the fear behind shame. Freud talked of a 'distressing feeling' which comes 'suddenly'. He connected shame with embarrassment, of the attempt to 'escape or hide' and finally of 'anxiety' and rejection, some of the key characteristics of the experience of shame.

However, Freud, still deeply rooted in his theory of the instincts, could not take his speculations any further. Within that theory, he could only conclude that the feeling of shame is the result of unresolved childhood conflicts.

Nevertheless, in Freud's analysis there was already an embryonic link between shame and the ideal-self. For example, Freud talked of 'inadequacy' caused by a 'breach of the dress regulations'. In other words, he is implying the existence of a standard compared to which one finds the clothing inadequate. It can be argued that the plight of human kind, exemplified by Odysseus, is for one's most private self to be exposed 'naked and covered in mud', i.e. in a position of humiliation, powerlessness and loss

of status. In 1900, Freud lacked the theoretical framework to develop the understanding of this 'expulsion from Paradise' beyond the theory of reaction-formation.

1.3 The Structural Model

One of the reasons that Freud abandoned the topographical model, was its inadequacy in dealing with issues such as conscience, morality and, what was becoming increasingly apparent through his clinical practice , unconscious feelings of guilt. These issues could not be properly addressed without taking into account the influence of the external world which, within the topographical model, was largely neglected.

Another important point was the growing awareness of other factors which motivate human beings, in particular the child, which are not connected with drives, such as the development of the ideal. Freud's concept of the ego-ideal however, remained relatively un-examined until attention was redirected to it by Piers and Singer (1953), Erikson (1956) and Lynd (1958). Lewis (1971) suggests that perhaps one reason was the relatively late acknowledgement in Freudian psychoanalytic writings of the importance of the concept of the self, as distinguished from the ego. Freud made no distinction between the ego in the sense of life-preserving force and in the sense of a 'self-preserver', when 'self' means self-esteem or self-regard.

Freud described the change in his thinking as resulting from a shift in interest from the repressed to the repressing forces in the mind. The movement to a functional study of the mind or more precisely, the study of the interactions between the parts of the mind which inaugurate mental conflict, made the distinction between conscious and unconscious less and less relevant.

The third phase can be considered as starting with the publication of 'The Ego and the Id' in 1923, and it is usually referred to as the 'Structural Model'. The shift to

this third phase, was based on Freud's diminishing interest in the qualities of experience in favour of the study of organised functional systems and the agents operating within them. Hence he put forward a model which represented a tripartite division of the mental apparatus into the major structures (from which the name Structural Model), of the id, ego and superego. Freud refers to shame as an ego 'activity'.

In the 'Outline of Psychoanalysis' (1940), written some forty-five years after the 'Studies on Hysteria', Freud again refers to the role of mortification in neurosis. He uses the metaphor "mortification suffered in silence" as in the first case, but this time mortification is placed in the context of the superego turning against the self (Lewis 1971).

The above sections have followed the development of the concept of shame in the three phases of Freudian metapsychology. Reference, however, has been made exclusively to direct mentions of shame. The following section suggests the existence of another, hidden form of shame.

1.4 The Hidden Concept of Shame in Freud

In the following section it will be argued that alongside the explicit references to shame as a reaction-formation, there exists in Freud's work another form of shame connected to such phenomena which later would be conceptualised in terms of the ideal-self and narcissism. The implications of the existence of this form of shame for the development of the concept of shame will be also discussed.

There are ninety instances in Freud's work where the word shame appears: nine of these examples connect shame to morality, thirteen to disgust and the majority of the examples to either sexuality, sexual organs or bodily functions.

By comparison, there are 367 instances in which the word 'guilt' is mentioned (excluding guilty and guiltless), demonstrating the relative importance of these two concepts. Bearing this in mind, there are some important considerations to be made. For example, there are instances where Freud used the word guilt to describe what one could argue was more an experience of shame. For instance:

"An interpretation of the normal, conscious sense of guilt (conscience) presents no difficulties; it is based on the tension between the ego and the ego-ideal and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency. The feelings of inferiority so well known in neurotics are presumably not far removed from it. In two very familiar maladies the sense of guilt is over-strongly conscious; in them the ego-ideal displays particular severity and often rages against the ego in a cruel fashion. The attitude of the ego-ideal in these two conditions, obsessional neurosis and melancholia, present, alongside of this similarity, differences that are no less significant." (Freud 1923:50)

Here Freud talks of the feeling which results from the tension between the ego and the ego-ideal which later came to be considered as shame (Piers and Singer 1953, Pines 1987). Secondly, he links this to a feeling of inferiority, a sensation strongly connected with shame, whereas guilt is accompanied moreover by a feeling of powerfulness, albeit conflictual (Lewis 1971). Finally, Freud attributes a strongly conscious sense of guilt to both obsessional neurosis and melancholia, whereas Lewis (1971) states very clearly that while obsession is the thought disorder accompanying guilt, shame is coupled with depression.

The other case of a hidden sense of shame in Freud's writing has been further developed by Lewis (1971) and relates to instances where he refers to neither shame nor guilt and yet, under closer scrutiny it becomes clear that what he is describing is shame. Mortification, as pointed out above, is one of these examples.

It is open to question whether this problem was then repeated in later literature, where the problems of clear and uniform definition on the one hand and of the usage of synonyms of shame or feelings belonging to its family on the other hand, made shame even more invisible than it actually was.

This confusion in terminology is very evident, for instance, in 'The Ego and the Id', particularly in the chapter 'The Ego and the Superego'. Here there is confusion about the use of the term 'ego-ideal' in contrast to the superego, as well as in what Freud defines as guilt. (Some space has been given to the debate on the difference between these terms in the Introduction). In order to introduce the concept of ego-ideal he says:

"But now that we have embarked upon the analysis of the ego we can give an answer to all those whose moral sense has been shocked and who have complained that there must surely be a higher nature in man: 'Very true', we can say, 'and here we have that higher nature, in this ego-ideal or superego, the representative of our relation to our parents. When we were little children we knew these higher natures, we admired them and feared them; and later we took them into ourselves.'

[...] As a substitute for a longing for the father, it contains the germ from which all religions have evolved. The self-judgement which declares that the ego falls short of its ideal produces the religious sense of humility to which the believer appeals in his longing. As a child grows up, the role of father is carried on by teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and

prohibitions remain powerful in the ego-ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship. The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt." (Freud 1923:37)

It is now widely accepted that one of the main distinguishing factors between shame and guilt is that while guilt is caused by breaking moral prohibitions (which can also, however, cause shame), only shame is caused by falling short of one's ego-ideal (Lewis 1971, Jacobson 1965, Pines 1987). Hence, by today's definition, it could be argued that Freud was often discussing shame, though referring to it as guilt. This makes researching Freud's view of shame highly problematic. If only the 'visible' mentions of shame are considered, there is the risk of missing potentially interesting contributions, which appear under different headings.

1.5 Conclusions

This chapter has looked at the changes the concept of shame has undergone in the development of Freud's metapsychology. An in-depth examination of the development of shame as a reaction-formation as well as the relationship between shame and guilt within that model has been attempted. Alongside the examination of shame as reaction-formation it has been suggested that the existence of another view of shame is present in Freudian writing, albeit in embryonic form; that connected to the ideal-self with narcissistic undertones. The debate around these two forms of shame will be discussed further in the following chapters.

This chapter has also highlighted the importance of shame in human emotional life, its connection with pathology and with motivation. However, this is done within

Freud's metapsychology which views shame exclusively as an intrapsychic phenomenon. One of the aims of this thesis is to argue against this model of shame; the next chapter contains a review of the literature which goes beyond the construction of shame as connected to exclusively intrapsychic conflicts.

CHAPTER TWO:

Beyond the Intrapsychic

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the different constructions of shame within Freudian metapsychology. The chapter followed the development and changes in meaning and function attributed to shame in the three phases. Shame as reaction-formation was examined in detail because it still is one of the two main formulations of shame within psychoanalytic thinking.

As discussed at the beginning of chapter one, in looking for the causes of shame, Freud moved from a focus on the external world to a formulation of shame as an exclusively intrapsychic phenomenon.

In this chapter I will take a reverse route and move away from the exclusively intrapsychic understanding of shame towards an investigation of its role in social and interpsychic dynamics. The focus of this chapter is on shame as the primary social emotion, generated by the constant monitoring of the self in relation to others (Scheff 1990). I will look at the role of shame in the 'self-other' interaction, as a motivator of human behaviour, in social development and in conformity. In this chapter I will also examine shame as failure of the ideal-self, the other main psychoanalytic formulation of shame.

In order to look at shame in the self-other interaction and its relation to the ideal-self I will start with a brief clarification of the concept of self.

2.1 The Self

It has been argued that shame cannot be fully understood within the context of structural (conflict-defence) psychology, but that further investigation into a broader psychology of the self and its deficits, in particular the self-other relationship, is necessary (Adler 1912, 1929, Morrison 1989, Kohut 1971, 1977, 1984, Kernberg 1975). In line with this, some authors have attributed the increase of interest in shame to its role in the development of the self (Hartman 1950, Thrane 1970, Tantom 1990, Mollon 1984).

Freud used the term '*das ich*' to refer to both the person's self as a whole and to the ego as a part of the mind; a psychological organization or 'structure' (Sandler 1986), although some authors distinguished between the ego as structure and the self as referent of one's person as a subjective, experiencing agent (Hartman 1950, Jacobson 1954).

This confusion has continued in later writing and has inevitably affected the conceptualisation of conflicts leading to shame. For example, shame has been described as: a tension between the ego and superego (Wumser 1981); tension between the ego and the ego-ideal (Piers and Singer 1953, Lynd 1958, Chasseguet-Smirgel 1985, Archer S. 1993); a perceived discrepancy between the self and the ideal-self (Sandler et al. 1963), or as a defect in the ideal-self (Morrison 1983) which also produces the affective state of lowered self-esteem (Jacobson 1954, Sandler *et al.* 1963, Chasseguet-Smirgel 1985). Considering the importance of these crucial

differences, a brief clarification of the terminology and its theoretical implication is necessary at this stage.

The superego concept describes the special, internal monitoring agency by means of which people evaluate themselves and their behaviour. The term ego-ideal was first introduced by Freud in 'On Narcissism' (1914), in which the ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of childhood. This was clearly differentiated from the conscience, which had a more censoring function. In 'The Ego and the Id' (1923), conscience was identified with the superego (although at this stage Freud used the two concepts synonymously).

Generally speaking, although both concepts underwent many contradictory changes during the development of Freud's thought (see Sandler *et al.* 1963 for a review), the ego-ideal, as the 'loving function of the superego' (Schafer, 1960), contains the ideals towards which the individual strives, whether they come from identification with previous narcissistic states, identification with idealised parents or from society. The superego, on the other hand, tends to have a more critical, punitive and censoring function (Schafer, 1960).

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be agreement on whether they are to be considered different aspects of the same agency with different functions (Hartmann and Lowenstein 1962, Piers and Singer 1953), or totally different agencies (A. Reich 1954). They are, nevertheless, crucial concepts in regards to this thesis, because they introduce the influence of external factors in intrapsychic life.

In particular, as is argued throughout this thesis, ideals and superego introjects, are of crucial importance to women due to their current position in a patriarchal society. Lewis (1971) approached this issue from the point of view of the development of the

superego in men and women and how this might justify women's higher proneness to shame. She argued that if we accept that a strong sense of self is partly based on the identification with positively cathected internal objects, then:

"Since women have no penis, the castration threat as a route to identification with parental values is absent. Little girls, having had at first a wish to be like mother, go through a developmental period when they devalue mother and their own wish to be like her, in favour of a wish to be like father, who possesses a penis. This identification route, however, leads women into an inevitable attitude of disappointment in themselves for the absence of a penis. Men, in contrast, when they identify with their fathers, do not meet with this particular intrinsic disappointment. [...] It is tempting to speculate that this difference between men and women might be formulated as the difference in proneness to shame or guilt. Women, who enter the Oedipal conflict and leave it with the "scar" of inferiority, might be thought to be more prone to shame or feelings of failure to live up to an ego-ideal. Freud's observations about the more personalized superego of women are in keeping with the formulation that the characteristic superego state of women is shame, while the corresponding state for men is guilt." (Lewis 1971:430-1)

2.1.1 The Self and the Ideal

In psychoanalytic literature there is a strong consensus on shame being the affect deriving from the failure to live up to one's ideals (Sandler *et al.* 1963, Lewis 1971). There is also agreement on how low self-esteem is correlated to conflicts in the self-representation (Sandler 1986, Pines 1987, Lewis 1971, Wumser 1981, Silberstein *et al.* 1987) and more specifically, how loss of self-esteem derives from a discordancy between wishful self-images and a self that appears to be failing, defective, inferior,

weak and contemptible by comparison (Lewis, 1971). These conflicts are apt to evoke feelings of inferiority and shame (Sandler 1986, Wumser 1981).

The working definition of self used in this thesis is based on a concept first put forward by Jacobson (1954). The self is said to contain a 'non-experiential' psychological structure which exists outside consciousness ("self schema") and an 'experiential' self-representation which is the image and subjective experience of ourselves that we have at any given moment.

The concept of self-representation is crucial to the concept of ideal-self as formulated by Sandler (1986) and has important implications for shame: "The self-representation can assume a wide variety of shapes and forms, depending on the pressures of the id, the requirements of the external world and the demand and standards of the introjects." (Sandler and Rosenblatt, 1963:152).

One of these forms is that of the ideal-self, which is the most desirable at any one time: 'the-self-I-want-to-be' (Sandler *et al.* 1963). It is within this connotation which the term ideal-self will be used in this thesis when referring to conflicts between self and self-representations which provoke shame. This choice has been made because of the importance given to the constant interaction between the internal identifications/introjects and the external world in the building of the self-representations. The great emphasis placed on experience suggests that if a certain behaviour or response has been reinforced by the outside world, it is likely to become part of the ideal states with which the individual can identify. Of particular interest is the link suggested by Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985) between the ego-ideal and self-esteem which depends greatly on other people's responses to us. She considered the 'loss of society love' as a narcissistic injury and shame as the product of the discrepancy between ego and ego-ideal. She, like Sandler (1963), stressed the

importance of peers in the 'checking out' of our ideals in the external world and the impossibility of doing so in isolation.

2.1.2 Field-dependency

The understanding of the relationship between shame and the self in a social context has been furthered by the exploration of field-dependency, a phenomenon which also carries important gender-related differences in the experience of shame and guilt.

Field-dependence is a term used to describe a person's relative difficulty in perceiving an item as separate from its embedding context:

"[...] low self-esteem and high need for approval, reflecting a devalued self-concept, are characteristics which have been linked to field dependence. [...] Field-dependent perceivers are likely to be more influenced in their judgements by the opinions of others; they are also more likely to be other-directed in their social relationships." (Lewis 1971:49)

Lewis found that women are more field-dependent than men, and more prone to shame than men. In one of her studies, she found that field dependent perceivers are more likely to produce drawings of the human figure which are lacking in articulation and differentiation of the body parts. To the extent that a drawing of the human figure represents both the self-concept and the image of the body, these people may be said to have a less differentiated self-concept and body-image. Another important observation was that while field-independent patients were more successful in directing their hostility outward, field-dependent patients were more prone to self-directed hostility. This phenomenon will be illustrated and discussed in detail in the chapter "Shame of the victim". Lewis (1971) also establishes an empirical link

between field-dependence and depression and further suggests that proneness to shame is one route to the development of depression.

One of the conclusions which can be drawn from this study is that when the environment fails to support one's perception of oneself and the world, the solidity of one's own internal sense of self becomes crucial in maintaining a continuity of experience and a sense of value and self-esteem. As will be discussed later in detail, I would argue that this phenomenon is especially problematic for women due to their position in a patriarchal society and because of the internal construction of feminine identity.

Shame has been described as an experience in which an external source appears to scorn, despise or ridicule the self, producing a sensation of acute self-consciousness (Lewis 1971, 1987). This complicated, divided activity of the self makes it extremely difficult to function effectively. Very interesting from a feminist viewpoint is Lewis's analysis of this phenomenon as 'shame-based rage', which describes a state of paralysis where the subject is placed in a double-bind: one feels humiliated and enraged by the scorn and the hostility coming from a relevant 'other', but is unable to direct the rage against it because that would mean losing a love object. Shame-based rage is readily turned back against the self, both because of the self's passive position vis-a-vis the 'other' and because of the value the self places on the 'other'. This is very similar to Carol Gilligan's (1982) argument that women are very often caught in the dilemma between having a voice and staying in a relationship; that in order to maintain a relationship, women give up their voices. Some of the implications for women of shame-based rage and the related conflicts will be discussed in chapters eight, nine and ten.

2.2 Shame in Social Development

In the previous chapter I have examined the role played by shame in Freudian metapsychology. Although Freud paid some attention to morality and social norms, shame functioned primarily as a 'dam' for intrapsychic conflict. Later theorists, in looking at the function of shame in development, have paid more attention to its social component.

Erikson (1950, 1956) in particular was concerned with the process of social development of identity. In Erikson's theory shame appears very early in life - earlier than guilt - belonging to the second phase of human development. Erikson believed that, as the environment encourages the baby to 'stand on his own feet', both literally and figuratively, firmness must protect him against "...meaningless and arbitrary experiences of shame and early doubt" (Erikson 1950:226). If the child is denied the experience of the autonomy of free choice accompanied by supportive guidance, he will turn against himself all his urge to discriminate and manipulate and will develop a precocious conscience:

"Shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at: in one word, self-conscious. One is visible and not ready to be visible; which is why we dream of shame as a situation in which we are stared at in a condition of incomplete dress, in night attire, 'with one's pants down'. Shame is early expressed in an impulse to bury one's face, or to sink, right then and there, into the ground. But this, I think, is essentially rage turned against the self. He who is ashamed [...] would like to destroy the eyes of the world. *Instead he must wish for his own invisibility.*" (Erikson 1950: 227)

Therefore, in line with Lewis (1971), Erikson also looks at the likelihood that a person in a disempowered or helpless position, might turn anger against oneself. This dynamic is explored by Erikson in developmental terms: shame can develop as the child first stands up, gaining an extra awareness which permits him to note the relative measures of size and power. Shame then, is accompanied by a sense of being very small.

Because of the child's first realisation of its relative smallness and powerlessness, this stage is decisive for the development of the child's ratios of love/hate, cooperation/wilfulness, freedom of self-expression and its suppression:

"From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign over-control comes a sense of lasting propensity for doubt and shame." (Erikson 1950:228)

Erikson's contribution is important and thought provoking, but he makes no gender differentiation; he talks of a supposedly 'neutral' human being, although he only makes reference to male children. However, in reality, gender is a crucial factor in human development and has fundamental consequences. It is important to bear in mind, for example, that gender determines the kind of responses a child is likely to elicit even from its own mother (Chodorow 1978, Dinnerstein 1978), particularly as far as the mother-daughter relationship is concerned. This difference then, must have important consequences at the stage of shame-doubt that Erikson describes, as this is the phase when the foundations for self-worth, self-reliance and autonomy are laid. The implication from a gender point of view is that what is laid down is likely to be more shame and doubt for women than for men. This issue will be explored further in the next chapter.

2.3 Shame and Motivation

The previous section suggests that avoidance of shame in order to preserve a feeling of self-worth can be considered as motivating human conduct in itself and that the sense of self-worth has to be negotiated with other people. This is because:

"...no other affect is more disturbing to the self, none more central for the sense of identity. In the context of normal development, shame is the source of low self-esteem, diminished self-image, poor self-concept and deficient body-image. Shame itself produces self-doubt and disrupts both security and confidence. It can become an impediment to the experience of belonging and to shared intimacy. Shame always alerts us to any affront to human dignity. It is the experiential ground from which conscience and identity inevitably evolve." (Kaufman 1989:viii)

This attributes a very different role to shame and the emotions in human motivation from what Freud suggested.

Already with Anna Freud (1936), affects are granted a much more fundamental role in people's intra and interpsychic lives. Anna Freud introduced the idea of defence against affect as opposed to defence against instinct. She argued that affects are not only drive derivatives but also motives for defence (A.Freud 1936). In agreement with this, Sandler maintains that any motive must be indissolubly linked to the affect that accompanies it and that it is ultimately the affect and not the drive which is defended against (Sandler 1985). The implication of this is that people do not defend themselves against the cause of the feeling, as was thought in the past, but against the feelings themselves, which can then be regarded as causes. This has great implications for the affect of shame, the focus having shifted from the cause of shame, to the fact that shame is itself defended against and is in itself a motive for behaviour.

Very much in agreement with this point of view, but taking it to very different consequences is Tomkins whose ground-breaking work has been the basis of all contemporary research on the nature of the emotions (Nathanson, 1987), and has deeply influenced the psychoanalytic understanding of affects particularly in childhood (Brenner 1974, Basch 1976, Emde 1980, Demos 1988, Stern 1988).

According to Tomkins, affects are the primary biological motivating mechanisms, more urgent than drive deprivation, pleasure or physical pain. He argued that what we take as the most basic drives - hunger, sex etc. are powerless if not accompanied by the appropriate affects; it is the affect that gives us the sense of urgency.

The affect works as the amplifier of the drive. A simple example would be that we breathe, not because we are directly aware of the need for air, but because otherwise we would panic. If one did not feel panic when lacking air, but instead experienced euphoria, death would occur. It is the experience of panic which forces/motivates us to breathe. Both drives and affects require arousal, but without affect, the drives have insufficient strength to work as motivators.

Tomkins turned around Freud's notion that the emotions are derivatives of the drives and instead postulated that what we see as facial display, is the actual source of what we call emotion (Nathanson 1987). According to Tomkins, there are nine primarily facial responses - 'Innate Affects' - which are in operation from birth: three positive; interest/excitement, enjoyment/joy, surprise/startle and six negative; fear/terror, shame/humiliation, dismell, disgust, anger/rage, distress/anguish.

Until the development of speech as a symbolic communication, facial affect display is the major means of conveying information between infant and caregiver and remains a significant form of non-verbal communication throughout adult life.

Tomkins identified shame/humiliation as the posture of lowered eyes, lowered head, possibly with the face covered.

He argued that shame is an auxiliary to the affects of interest/excitement and enjoyment/joy, much as disgust is an auxiliary to the drive hunger. In this sense, the trigger producing the shame affect is any experience requiring rapid decrease in the affects of interest/excitement or enjoyment/joy in situations where the organism wishes to maintain the pre-existing affect state. Failure ranks high as such a trigger.

Tomkins obviously looks at shame within the context of social behaviour, but in my opinion, uses a biologically-deterministic approach which constructs shame as a 'thing' inside of people. The 'other' is, very similarly to Freud, construed as an external, separate stimulus.

2.4 Shame as Social Feeling

Other authors have studied shame as a social feeling as a much more sophisticated and complex phenomenon. These authors have emphasised how vital is the sense of shame to our individual and collective emotional, moral and spiritual welfare (Schneider 1977), how shame has the crucial function of demarcating what we consider social and what we want to keep private (Pines 1992), and the fundamental role of shame in social development as it teaches the child about right and wrong (York 1990).

Shame as a 'social feeling', particularly as a means of social control, is at the core of Scheff's "Microsociology: Discourse, Emotion and Social Structure" (1990) where

the suggested link between conformity, shame and self-esteem is very thought provoking and especially relevant for women.

Scheff's focus on the significance of emotion in human social relations gives a central place to pride and shame in the sustaining of self-identity. Pride and shame, he argues, serve as intense and automatic bodily signs of the state of one's bond to others. Pride is the sign of an intact bond; shame, of a severed or threatened bond.

For example, the clearest outer marker of pride is holding up one's head in public and looking others in the eye, while indicating respect by taking turns at looking and looking away. In overt shame, one shrinks, averting or lowering one's gaze, casting only furtive glances at the other. It is argued that both shame and pride come from the self's perception of its evaluation by others.

Scheff's 'deference-emotion system' refers to a compelling conformity to norms exterior to the self by informal but pervasive rewards and punishments. Outer deference to these norms is 'rewarded' and induces a feeling of inner pride; lack of deference or non-conformity is 'punished' and induces shame. Specifically, it is argued that when we present ourselves to others, we risk either overt or subtle rejection. Rejection usually leads to shame and its related emotions, while acceptance leads to pride.

Perhaps the most famous study on conformity is the Asch's study on conformity in group decisions (1956). The study tested the hypothesis that a majority of the subjects will find group standards compelling even though they are exterior and contradictory to their own individual standards. The essential question was: what difference existed between those who maintained their independence from the group and those who yielded? Scheff suggested that the subjects who yielded to the majority were those

who attempted to avoid the embarrassment (shame) of appearing different from the group.

Asch reported that some of the subjects found the experience extremely painful, fearing that they were suffering from some 'defect' which the study would disclose. Typical comments were: 'I don't want to seem different'; 'I don't want to seem an imbecile' etc. Asch commented further:

"They were dominated by their exclusion from the group which they took to be a *reflection on themselves*. Essentially they were unable to face a conflict which threatened, in some undefined way, to expose a deficiency in themselves. They were consequently trying to merge in the group in order not to feel peculiar. (italics added)

"[...] Our observation suggests that independence requires the capacity to accept the fact of opposition without a lowered sense of personal worth. The independent person has to organize his overt actions on the basis of experience for which he finds no support; this he can do only if he respects his experiences and is capable of claiming respect for them. The compliant person cannot face this ordeal because he translates social opposition into a reflection of his personal worth. Because he does so, the social conflict plunges him into pervasive and incapacitating doubt." (Scheff: 1990)

Asch's experiment was arranged to rob the individual of his or her own view of reality, but in a covert way. Scheff interpreted this process by linking it to self-esteem. He thought that the subjects who remained independent, although they experienced shame, had sufficient high self-esteem that they acted on their own judgements despite their feelings of shame. Those who yielded had low self-esteem,

they sought to avoid further feelings of shame by acting contrary to their own judgements.

As it will become clear in the research section, the women interviewed repeatedly reported similar experiences. In particular in the section on 'withdrawal' and 'facade' I will explore further women's accounts of their actions as a way of avoiding shame experiences

According to Scheff, low self-esteem might be conceptualized as a tendency towards endlessly recursive shame. Under this model, persons with high self-esteem would be those with the ability to manage shame in a way that it is acknowledged and discharged. Although shame is a painful emotion for them, it is not overwhelming. Persons with low self-esteem are unable to manage shame in this way. In this instance Scheff positions self-esteem as a personality trait, as a characteristic which resides in the individual.

However, he also links it with the puzzling phenomenon of disadvantaged class, race, or sex tolerance and compliance with a system which is patently unfair and ineffectual. He argued that members of subordinate groups or classes may have a specifically problematic experience of shame, in that it is generated both by outer scorn or ridicule and by interior events. Low status persons must not only face a lack of deference from the outer world, but must very often internalise the view of the dominant group and view themselves through the eyes of a scornful other. The result of this dynamic is that the dominated class develops shame over its members' characteristics and idealises the characteristics of the elite.

This is a powerful source of self-generated shame. Faced with both internally and externally generated shame, low status persons may be particularly susceptible to the

shame-rage feeling trap. This cuts two ways at once: it legitimizes their superiority and their political power and, in a subterranean way, reaffirms the shame and inferiority of the underclass in that its members regard themselves as lacking 'glamour'. If the members of a dominated class are ashamed of their own putative characteristics and this shame is not acknowledged and dispelled, it can result in a permanent under-valuation of self and overvaluation of the other, i.e. the ruling class.

In the next chapter I will attempt to put these observations in context, in order to analyse women's experience.

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have looked at shame as a social emotion, and its role in social and interpsychic dynamics. Shame, it has been argued, functions directly and indirectly as a powerful agent of social control, either through the accompanying feeling of uncertainty (Lewis 1971, Erikson 1962), the subtle deference emotion system (Scheff 1990), or through the human need for acceptance which motivates behaviour (Sandler 1985). However, shame has been looked at either through patriarchal frameworks with its male-centred analysis of the psyche (Lewis, Erikson, Sandler) or through positivistic frameworks (Tomkins and Scheff) which rest on the individual-society split by either constructing shame as a stimulus-response phenomenon or by locating it in the external world which exercises pressures on the individual to conform. However, this chapter has also highlighted the importance of the context in the experience of shame. In the following chapter I will look at women's experience of shame within the specific context of patriarchy.

In chapters one and two I have highlighted the constructivist nature of the theoretical frameworks illustrated by the diversity of meanings attributed to shame. Additionally, chapter two has shown how the shame experience is a negotiated product within a historical and social context. All of these will be developed in relation to women in the discourse analysis of interviews (chapters six to ten).

CHAPTER THREE:

Women and Shame

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews some essential contributions to the investigation of women's shame, attempting to pull together strands from the literature on shame in general, plus psychoanalytic and feminist sources. With Freud as its starting point, this chapter reviews the literature on how shame contributes to the perpetuation of women's inequality from within and without.

In this thesis, the view is taken that although the emotion of shame is not specific to women, it is, in some aspects, gender related. More specifically, it is rooted in historical constructions of femininity within a patriarchal society. Therefore, in this context, an investigation of shame will also look at issues of power and self-esteem. In other words, what precisely does it mean that women are more shame-prone than men, how can it be understood and what are the implications for women. This chapter aims at providing a theoretical framework for the further investigation of the phenomenon of women's shame and the associated low self-esteem.

3.2 Different Readings of Women's Shame

"A woman is born psychologically into shame and must develop out of shame before she can become a feminine being" (Anthony 1981:197).

Many authors have highlighted the important link between shame and femininity (Freud 1925, Lewis 1971, Irigaray 1974, Bartky 1990, Silberstein et al. 1987). Some have considered women to be more shame-prone than men (Freud 1925, Lewis 1971, Bartky 1990). Although clearly agreeing on the general principle, the above mentioned authors differ in the way they give meaning to shame and how they connect it to women. Three groups can be identified:

1. Authors (including Freud himself, 1933), who accept, or at least do not question Freud's general formulation of identity formation for women in terms of penis envy and the centrality of the Oedipus Complex. By doing so these authors seem to have accepted Freud's formulation as neutral and objective, but have explored Freud's statement that women are more shame-prone than men and thus offer useful insight into women's psychology (Lewis 1971, Jacobson 1954).

2. Those who also started from Freud's position, but take a very critical view of it. Particularly influential among these have been Mitchell (1973), and Irigaray (1974). They view Freud and the whole of his theory as rooted in a patriarchal society which deeply coloured his view of the formation of female sexual identity and shame. Their main focus is on the political representation of women proposed by Freud and only reflect on shame for women insofar as it is part of that representation, but do not specifically take a position on whether women are more shame-prone than men, nor do they explore the significance of shame for women.

3. A third group of authors have focused much more on shame as relevant to issues of gender and women's position in a patriarchal society. They have therefore concentrated on aspects of shame connected to women's sense of inferiority and uncertainty, their relationship with their bodies and with eating (Bartky 1990, Silberstein *et al* 1987, McFarland and Baker-Baumann 1990). The most extreme

position is taken by Bartky who elevates women's shame to the level of philosophical discourse. She claims that women not only experience shame more than men, but that shame is *the* female emotion in a patriarchal society.

3.2.1 Freud on Femininity and Shame

This section looks at Freud's representation of women as shameful and inferior beings, followed by an examination of the implications of this representation and its critique.

As early as 1897 in 'Extracts from the Fliess Papers, Letter 75', Freud had attributed to shame a special role in the female development:

"From this we can see that, with the successive waves of a child's development, he is overlaid with piety, shame, and such things, and how the non-occurrence of this extinction of the sexual zones can produce mental insanity as a developmental inhibition.[...] But the main distinction between the sexes emerges at the time of puberty, when girls are seized upon by a *non-neurotic sexual* repugnance and males by libido. For at that period a further sexual zone is (wholly or in part) extinguished in females which persists in males. I am thinking of the male genital zone, the region of the clitoris, in which during childhood sexual sensitivity is shown to be concentrated in girls as well as boys. Hence the flood of shame which overwhelms the female at that period, till the new, vaginal zone is awakened, whether spontaneously or by reflex action. Hence too, perhaps the anaesthesia of women, the part played by masturbation in children predisposed to hysteria and the discontinuance of masturbation if hysteria results." (Freud, 1897:270)

Already this extract pathologises and belittles women, who either see their female sexuality 'extinguished' (in the form of loss or abandonment of the clitoris as an erotic zone, the clitoris being regarded as the "male genital zone" in females) and are flooded with shame; the proposed alternative is to retain their attachment to their clitoris and masturbation, thus paving the way to hysteria. The implication of this quote is that shame is constructed as a natural and healthy response due to the intrinsic inferiority of women.

Another significant statement about women is contained in 'Infantile Sexuality' from the 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905). Here Freud discussed an alleged innate predisposition in children to polymorphous perversion:

"There is consequently little resistance towards carrying them out, since the mental dams against sexual excesses - shame, disgust and morality - have either not yet been constructed at all or are only in course of construction, according to the age of the child. In this respect children behave in the same kind of way as an average uncultivated woman in whom the same polymorphously perverse disposition persists. Under ordinary conditions she may remain normal sexually, but if she is led on by a clever seducer she will find all sort of perversion to her taste, and will retain them as part of her own sexual activities. Prostitutes exploit the same polymorphous, that is, infantile, disposition for the purposes of their profession; and, considering the immense number of women who are prostitutes or who must be supposed to have an aptitude for prostitution without becoming engaged in it, it becomes impossible not to recognize that this same disposition to perversions of every kind is a general and fundamental human characteristic." (Freud, 1905:191)

In this quote, average uncultivated women, children and prostitutes are put in the same category. This construction positions women as infantilised, criminalised and

pathologised⁴. However, from Freud's argument it would follow that shame in women, far from being stronger than in men, is in fact lacking, as if, like in childhood, it hasn't been fully constructed. This view contrasts starkly with the one expressed in 'Femininity' (1933) in 'The New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis', which has been the subject of great controversy and has earned Freud the label of misogynist. Freud's position can be summarised by the following quotes:

"Thus, we attribute a larger amount of narcissism to femininity, which also affects women's choice of object, so that to be loved is a stronger need for them than to love.

"[...] The effect of penis-envy has a share, furthermore, in the physical vanity of women, since they are bound to value their charms more highly as a late compensation for their original sexual inferiority.

"[...] Shame, which is considered to be a feminine characteristic *par excellence*, but is far more a matter of convention than might be supposed, has as its purpose, we believe, concealment of genital deficiency.

"[...] Women have made few contributions to the discoveries and inventions in the history of civilization; there is one technique which they may have invented - that of plaiting and weaving... Nature herself would seem to have given the model which this achievement imitates by causing the growth of the pubic hair that conceals the genitals. The step that remained to be taken lay in making the threads adhere to one another, while on the body they stick into

⁴ A graphic representation of this construction of women can be found in a famous poster of the suffragette movement which portrayed women along with the two other groups of adults who did not have the right to vote at that time: mental patients and criminals.

the skin and are only matted together...we should be tempted to guess the unconscious motive for the achievement." (Freud, 1933:132)

"The fact that women must be regarded as having little sense of justice is no doubt related to the predominance of envy in their mental life.

"[...] We also regard women as weaker in their social interests, and as having less capacity for sublimating their instincts than men. The former is no doubt derived from the dissocial quality which unquestionably characterizes all sexual relations.

"[...] A man of about thirty strikes us as a youthful, somewhat unformed individual ... A woman of the same age, however, often frightens us by her physical rigidity and unchangeability. Her libido has taken up final positions and seems incapable of exchanging them for others. There are no paths open to further development; it is as though the whole process had already run its course and remains thenceforward insusceptible to influence - as though indeed, the difficult development to femininity had exhausted the possibilities of the person concerned ... As therapists we lament this state of things, even if we succeed in putting an end to our patient's ailment by doing away with her neurotic conflict." (Freud, 1933:134,135)

Women then, are represented/constructed as passive beings, shame-ridden due to their lack of and envy for a penis. From the desire to conceal this deficiency came women's most significant activity and only contribution to civilization: weaving.

The concept of penis-envy and its symbolic meaning, has been at the centre of a lot of discussion among feminists. Of particular relevance is Irigaray's critique (1974,

1985) in which she focused on the penis as the only guarantor of sexual exchange. The woman who is "amputated, humiliated, mutilated" therefore desires 'it' and has to either have 'it' or act 'as if she has it'. She says:

"There is one problem, however; acting as if one had 'it', pretending to have 'it', in this kind of business, is a transaction that undercuts all the rates. Now woman cannot mime, pretend, any relation to *her own* sex organ(s) because she has been cut off from any access to idea, ideality, specula(riza)tion, and indeed a certain organic 'reality'. (Irigaray 1978:114)

She connects this strategy to "the cosmetics, the disguises of all kinds that women cover themselves with, [which] are intended to deceive, to promise more value than can be delivered." (Irigaray 1978:114)

Irigaray argued that the pretence gives women only a very fleeting reassurance, because of the constant fear of being discovered value-less; a discovery very similar to 'shame exposure' where one is constantly anxious of being found out as inadequate. The importance of this way of looking at the phenomenon is that it expresses how the internalisation of women's position in a patriarchal society has great effect on women's sense of value and identity. The very foundations of women's sense of identity as lacking a phallus are built on a sense of being second class and inferior. The trouble, however, with Irigaray's position is that it fails to provide a basis for challenging these stereotypes as, exactly like Freud, it locates their essence in biology (Sayers, 1986:48).

The other major work by Freud on femininity is 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' (1925), where Freud defines the "normal path to womanhood". Here he introduced the importance of identification with the mother and its influence on womanhood. Freud stressed certain complexities

and difficulties in this process, although it was left to later authors to develop and explore the full implications in terms of maternal introjection and identification.

Although this work was written before 'Femininity', it is discussed later because logically it follows and expands on the ways in which girls attempt to 'obtain a phallus':

"The girl must shift from mother-attachment to a sexual desire for the father. [...] She makes the shift from mother-love to father-love because she has to, and then with pain and protest. She has to, because she is without the phallus. No phallus, no power. [...] The girl's entry into her feminine 'destiny' is characterized by hostility to the mother for her failure to make her a boy; it is an entry marked by penis-envy. [...] After her recognition of castration, the girl has three courses open to her, only one of which is 'normal'. With her self-love already shattered by her 'lack', her hostility to the mother (who was supposed to be phallic but who was discovered to be likewise castrated) can make her turn away from women and womanhood altogether; in which case, debasing and despising women, as men do, she is liable to become inhibited and neurotic. Or she can refuse to abandon the pleasures of her clitoris; if so, she remains at the pre-Oedipal 'masculine' phase. Finally, if by exploiting 'her passive instinctual impulses' - that is, the passive aims of her sexual drive - she can transfer her sexual attention from her mother to her father, she can want first his phallus, and then by the all-important analogy, his baby, then the man again, to give her this baby. Thus she becomes a little woman." (Mitchell 1974:96,97)

Freud clearly states the symbolic significance of the phallus and equates it with power. He also maintains that the girl is hostile towards her mother because she did not give her a penis. She can resolve this difficult situation in three ways: she can

refuse to identify with her mother and turn neurotic; she can refuse to give up her clitoris and remain 'masculine'; or she can chose normality. This implies turning passive and desiring first, her father, then, to have his children. If we translate this message using 'phallus' as a symbol of power, the representation of a healthy woman is one whose only power derives from having a man and being a mother.

The other question which Freud did not pursue and is fundamental to female identity, is what happens to the devalued, penis-less mother and what kind of object of identification can she offer? Furthermore, what are the implications of identifying with a devalued mother for the female sense of identity? Perhaps Freud was attempting to find an answer when, in 1916, talking of the 'Richard III' in all of us and our resentment for wounds to self-love, he concluded that there is one general instance of people being born with the crippled King Richard's winter of discontent:

"...we may point out that the claim of women to privileges and to exemption from so many of the importunities of life rests upon the same foundation. As we learn from psycho-analytic work, women regard themselves as having been damaged in infancy, as having been undeservedly cut short of something and unfairly treated; and the embitterment of so many daughters against their mother derives, ultimately, from the reproach against her of having brought them into the world as women instead of as men." (Freud 1916:315)

Freud did not pursue the matter further and the basic representation of woman here is that, after becoming aware of the wound to her narcissism, she develops, like a scar, a sense of inferiority. It could be argued that Freud was struggling to make sense of a difference not just of sexual identity and sexual objects, but of a more basic sense of identity.

As has been pointed out, he tried to do this within a theoretical framework which described male development as the norm (Millett 1972, Temperley 1984). However, if Freud's theory of penis-envy is read in a descriptive rather than prescriptive sense, his view describes (and at the same time re/constructs) the 'female being-in-the world', i.e. castrated, represented by lack of a phallus and lack of power.

Equally important is that he traced this process back to pre-Oedipal phases, stating very clearly that the Oedipus complex concludes the process of castration, which is partly operated by upbringing and intimidation from outside which threatens them with loss of love (Mitchell 1974), in this way recognising the disempowering process of upbringing and intimidation which threatens them with shame. Freud had to acknowledge the role of society and external values in the formation of female identity. From this point of view he is implying a sense of inferiority which has been slowly built into women's sense of identity right from the beginning of their lives.

For the present purposes, in this theory women are constructed as more shame-prone than men because of their lack of a phallus which roots their identity in inadequacy, inferiority and powerlessness. Freud's observation that women attempt to have access to some 'phallic' power through relationship with men and motherhood is very consistent with the observation that often heterosexual women feel empty and failing if they are not in relationships (Bickerton 1983). The centrality of romantic love in women's lives (Hite 1987, Horney 1967) and a special cathexis in motherhood even when other alternatives are available (Coward 1992), further confirms this. However, there has been very little research in these areas, particularly using this kind of framework.

3.2.2 Sandra Lee Bartky: A Feminist View of Shame and Women

After Freud there followed a long period of silence on the subject of shame and women. Lewis was the first to break the silence about shame, followed by others, but none of these made *shame and women* the main subject of their inquiry. As discussed in chapter two, Lewis claimed that women are more shame-prone than men because they are more field-dependent and more prone to self-directed hostility. The main thrust of her theory was that proneness to shame might be one route to the development of depression, which more often affects women.

Lewis did attempt to address the difficulties of identification with a devalued mother, but there is no evidence in her writing that she considered the absence of a penis as symbolic of absence of power, nor did she question in any way Freud's phallo-centric formulation of female development. Therefore, although her contribution draws attention to the links between shame, depression, self-esteem and field-dependency and attempts a connection between internal world and external influences in the experience of shame, she does not question the foundations of the patriarchal, biologically based, psychoanalytic discourse on women. In fact, it could be argued that because of her uncritical attitude to the Freudian model, her linking of higher proneness to shame with depression pathologises women.

The various authors who have addressed the subject of shame and women since Lewis, have generally found that shame was detected while investigating other phenomena. For instance shame has been found to figure prominently in women's relation with their bodies and with food (Silberstein et al 1987, McFarland and Baker-Baumann 1990) and in survivors of child sexual abuse (Andrews, 1995).

What casts Bartky's 'Shame and Gender' (1990) in a category of its own is, apart from the sharpness of the insights it offers, is that she addresses shame for women as a feminist issue, whereby shame is the expression of women's oppression. In agreement with existential philosophy, Bartky maintains that affective states have a cognitive dimension:

"[...] if knowing cannot be described in ways that are gender-neutral, neither can feelings. Shame is the feeling disclosive of women's 'being-in-the-world'." (Bartky 1990:84)

"The shame of some of these women was not a discrete occurrence, but a perpetual attunement, the pervasive affective taste of a life" (Bartky 1990:96).

Bartky's argument hinges on few basic assumptions: firstly, that women are situated differently than men within the ensemble of social relations; secondly, that women are more shame-prone than men and further, that the feeling itself has a different meaning in relation to women's total psychic situation and general social location than has a similar emotion when experienced by men.

Women's shame, Bartky holds, is manifest in a pervasive sense of personal inadequacy that is profoundly disempowering and reveals the "generalized condition of dishonour" which is women's lot in a sexist society. Within this framework, shame is not so much a particular feeling or emotion, as a pervasive and constant adaptation to the social environment; women's shame is more than merely an effect of subordination but, within the larger universe of patriarchal social relations, a profound mode of disclosure both of self and situation.

Following on from Sartre (1943), shame requires two essential elements: an actual or internalised audience with the capacity to judge and, more importantly, the

recognition that *one is*, in some important sense, the way one is *seen to be*. It follows that women recognise themselves as inferior. Bartky does not develop this point and does not explain why and how women do collude with a diminished representation of themselves. In this respect Bartky's argument has a mechanistic flavour which fails to pursue a crucial point in the perpetuation of women's oppression.

Bartky focuses on the representation of women's worth (and related low self-esteem), arguing that these are not just determined by their achievement measured against their ideals (as argued by Rawls 1971) but in fact might be more significantly determined by their status in the social hierarchy. This is a very valid point, however, Bartky does not consider the internalisation of societal ideals which unconsciously contribute to the perpetuation of women's position. It could be argued that she has introduced a false dichotomy between what are the individual's ideals and the ideals that come from their position in a hierarchy, as both influence each other and exist in a continuum.

If we accept that shame is such that one is ashamed of oneself before the 'other,' the 'other', Bartky argues, is over-determined in a sexist society as women are subjected to demeaning treatment by a variety of 'others'. She concludes that women are more shame-prone than men because they are made to feel shame in the major sites of social life. However, because this is an external imposition, it never reaches the level of belief; her students, for example, felt inadequate and sensed a general inferiority, without really believing themselves to be inadequate or inferior.

However, Bartky's explanation does not explain the high levels of self-doubt and uncertainty even in situations of obvious success and runs contrary to others' who have claimed that women's success and achievement never really reaches the level of belief (Walkerdine 1990). Examples have been given of women succeeding and

at the same time disbelieving that the success had anything to do with themselves (Horney 1967, Walkerdine 1990). Regardless of the differences, what is highlighted is the existence of a deep sense of confusion and uncertainty about women's own value. Bartky's explanation of this phenomenon is:

"Female self-awareness in the situation I describe is importantly constituted by a certain contradiction between appearance and reality: on the one hand, the presumption of equality on the part of all actors in this drama, on the other hand, its actual though covert and unacknowledged absence. An ambiguous situation, affirming women in some ways and diminishing them in others [...] tends to produce in women a confused and divided consciousness" (Bartky 1990:94)

It has been argued that shame and guilt have positive roles in maintaining a moral equilibrium (Taylor 1985); Bartky on the contrary stresses the painful and destructive effect of shame, particularly (as is the case for women), when it is a continuous disclosure of inferiority to a denigrated subject: a pervasive, emotional reminder of their position in the world:

"Better people are not made in this way, only people who are weaker, more timid, less confident, less demanding, and hence more easily dominated. [...] In all these ways, shame is profoundly disempowering. The need for secrecy and concealment that figures so largely in the shame experience is disempowering as well, for it isolates the oppressed from one another. [...] Under conditions of oppression, the oppressed must struggle not only against more visible disadvantages but against guilt and shame as well. It was not for nothing that the movement for black empowerment called not only for black civil rights and economic advancement, but for 'black pride'." (Bartky, 1990:97)

It is the insights summarised in the above quote that make Bartky's contribution so unique. What has been observed phenomenologically is considered in its function as instrument of oppression. The power of shame is acknowledged in isolating women, in making them more timid, less demanding, weaker human beings, i.e. easier to oppress. It could be argued that the disempowering capacity of shame is increased by the contradictory messages women are given about their worth.

There are, however, some areas in which Bartky's position is problematic. Firstly, it positions women as passive victims and the explanation of their oppression is one-dimensional and one-directional. There is a lack of acknowledgment of the complex interplay between individual and society and in particular no reference is made to the role of ideology and its more subtle workings in women's oppression. This links with the other element which gives a one-dimensional quality to the representation of women: the absence of insight into the role played by women's internal world in the perpetuation of their own oppression and their collusion with it.

Bartky's contribution nevertheless has filled a gap in the understanding of the function of shame in women's oppression and has elevated shame to the level of a political statement on women's social condition.

3.3 Summary and Conclusion

The literature on shame suggests the existence of an important link between shame and femininity. Some authors have considered shame as a manifestation of passivity and dependency which was inherently feminine (Freud 1933, Lewis 1971, 1987). Other authors, on the contrary have attributed the higher shame-proneness in women to their historical position in a shifting, patriarchal society (Anthony 1981, Bartky

1990). Others authors found both the above positions to be oversimplifications and argued that shame exists equally strongly in women and men; in the latter, in connection to the experience of "feminine" feelings such as the need for intimacy and attachment (Morrison 1989).

I find that all the readings of shame and femininity discussed so far suffer from the same problems (although in different forms), which makes them very limited and unsatisfactory: they all look at women's shame as a thing 'out there' or as mainly intrapsychic. Secondly, they all use dichotomies to explain how women feel more shameful than men, relying on splits between male and female qualities, between the powerful and the powerless, between oppressors and victims. In this way they all provide a very narrow view on shame which does not explain how it is that women do take on the position of being shameful. In other words, the discussed readings have a mechanistic attitude which leaves out the lived experience of women's shame.

It is the capturing of this lived experience that chapters six to ten have as their aim.

CHAPTER FOUR:

From Theory to Method

"If we labelled all punishable sexual behavior as sex offence, we would find ourselves in the ridiculous situation of having all of our male histories consist almost wholly of sex offenders, the remaining few being not only nonoffenders but nonconformists. [...] to label him a sex offender would be to reduce our study to a ludicrous level."

Rather than "reduce [their] study to a ludicrous level", which would be unthinkable, the honorable scientists chose to sanction as normative the male commitment to the use of force documented by their study." (Dworkin 1981:53)

4.0 Introduction

This chapter has the multiple aims of providing a historical description of the development of the research and of looking at some of the issues and tensions in using a reflexive, feminist approach in a psychoanalytic framework. In this chapter I will also discuss some methodological issues connected to the use of different research methods in the social sciences and a discussion of discourse analysis.

4.1 History of the research

In this section I will outline a history of the development of the research. This serves two purposes: it describes how the research unfolded and developed and creates the opportunity to explore some general epistemological issues.

4.1.1 The Pilot study

The pilot study consisted of prolonged exploratory interviews with three women (friends of the researcher), with no rigid structure. During these interviews we explored the concept of shame generally as well as other issues which surfaced. The three interviews were carried out at different times, with a progressively more developed structure.

In all three there was plenty of space for feedback from the participants on what areas they had experienced as difficult or emotionally provoking. I encouraged the participants to tell me as much as possible about their responses. Suggestions were gathered as to what might have enabled them to talk more freely. They also gave feedback on what other areas they felt should be included in the interviews and in what order they would have preferred to have been asked the questions.

Altogether, each meeting including the interview, the immediate feedback and the gathering of thoughts and considerations (which were sometimes offered days later), took at least two to three hours.

I conceptualize the process of constructing the research instruments (interviews and questionnaires) as being similar to the drawing of a map. After extensive reading I

had absorbed the general boundaries and configuration of the territory I wanted to explore. Therefore I did not come into the interview process, even at its initial stages, as a blank screen. However, I did start by asking the interviewees to set their own boundaries and define what the territory of shame was for them. This I did by asking them to tell me about an experience of shame. I did not tell them what *I* thought shame was. From then on I kept comparing and adjusting our two maps. Each time I reviewed my 'map', reducing it in scope and focusing on details with the aim of combining theory and practice without prioritising either of the two.

I used the results from the pilot study as the basis for the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interviews in their final form (see Appendix 1 for the interview schedule), were divided in two: one, more contained, started with the same invitation to describe an experience of shame and aimed at investigating the 'shame scenario'; the other was more loosely based and contained some general questions on self-esteem, women's experience of themselves and how these related in shame.

The decision for a more unstructured section in the interview rests on some important methodological issues. Firstly, in the tradition of feminist research (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995b), doing research *for* women rather than *on* women, was the priority (Harding 1987,1991, Griffin 1995, Stanley and Wise 1993). It has been argued (Smith 1974, Stanley and Wise 1993), that the traditional social sciences, rooted in patriarchy, alienate women not only from theory but from experience itself. This is because the social sciences don't merely justify and rationalize the power relationships which oppress women, they also provide the concepts, models and methods by which experience can be translated and transformed (Stanley and Wise 1993:162). As a result, what is often examined in research are what social scientists define as problems, not the issues and concerns of women's everyday experience. Therefore rather than testing specific hypotheses, this study was designed as a

preliminary investigation with the aim of exploring the relationship of shame with different areas of female psychology and finally develop some hypotheses which would require further studying.

It has been pointed out that hypotheses are worth testing only in areas where a good deal is already known and that before this stage most research is of exploratory nature (Stacey 1969); however, this attitude increases the danger of hypothetical deductive research examining and perpetuating problems actually created by their own models (Widdicombe 1992, Hollway 1984a). Although there have been many contributions in psychoanalytic literature on the link between shame and femininity and some empirical studies on shame, empirical data is generally lacking in psychoanalytic research (a relatively new area) and particularly in psychoanalytic/feminist research into shame.

Using an interview method to gather the data, allowed a closer degree of involvement between myself as woman and researcher and the participants. It also allowed space for the women to express and explore what was connected to their experience of shame, instead of constraining them within the boundaries set by the traditional questionnaire method. If, for instance, a woman having been asked to talk about her experience of shame told me about her feelings of inadequacy at work and her migraines, even if she did not mention the word shame, I accepted that nevertheless she was talking about shame. In Salmon's words: "It is perhaps only when researchers are able to provide an attentive and respectful place for first-person accounts that research can hope to offer human illumination." (Salmon 1990:168)

The feedback to the pilot interviews allowed a further insight into the participant's personal experience. This in return enriched and added complexity to the exploration of women's experience of shame; it also allowed for increased closeness to their

everyday life rather than just the intellectual exploration of it. Furthermore, this exchange of feedback acknowledged and capitalized on the interrelationship between the subjectivities of both researcher and participants, whereby the subjective experience of the researcher as a woman was taken into consideration. The assumption behind this type of approach is that both researcher and interviewees participate to the social construction of knowledge (Wetherell 1992, Henwood and Pidgeon 1995b).

Finally, my investigation was not value-free. From the researcher's standpoint, women's experience is viewed within the context of a patriarchal society. The intrapsychic and interpsychic processes of socialisation are therefore considered crucial for the understanding of women's lives. The investigation aimed at creating a space where women's experience could be explored and taken seriously.

4.2 Method: Why Qualitative Research

Qualitative methodology (semi-structured interview, grounded theory and discourse analysis) was employed to explore shame as a discourse of oppression for women.

In the following section I will discuss the implications of using a 'new paradigm' research strategy (Harré and Secord 1971, Reason and Rowan 1981). Particular attention is paid to the relevance of discourse analysis to feminist research (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Hollway 1989). I will start by briefly mentioning points of divergence between quantitative and qualitative methodologies and their epistemological underpinnings.

Quantitative methodologies have their basis in positivism and Newtonian methods of inquiry (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, 1994, 1995a, Silverman 1993, Hollinger 1994). Adherents of positivism believe in 'realism' and measure only directly observable phenomena, aiming to remove all biases and subjectivity in order to produce abstract, universal principles within the Newtonian concept of cause and effect. Within this framework, 'quantification' is seen as the *sine qua non* of the natural science paradigm because it renders theoretical concepts 'observable' and testable (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995a).

Alternatively, some qualitative methodologies and in particular those resting on a post-structuralist framework, hold that direct perception is impossible because the way in which we see the world is always a product of the way we interpret it and the historical, social, political models or systems we adopt to make sense of it. Consequently, perception is always relative and a product of a complex set of interpretations. Hence, it is impossible for the researcher to come up with universally generalizable facts: our analysis is always a product of the tools by which we measure the world (Hollinger 1994).

Quantitative data gathering and analysis is based on an '*a priori*' assumption of what may or may not be found. The attempt to predict and control behaviour and to repress the exploration of experience - in particular the experience of the researcher - has been at the core of social psychology since the beginning of the century (Parker 1994).

Instead, qualitative methods privilege the search for '*verstehen*' (understanding) and meaning. They look at the ways in which knowledge is generated within networks of social activities and systems of socially constituted meanings (Hollway 1989, Henwood and Pidgeon 1995a, Hollinger 1994).

The adoption of a post-structuralist view-point implies the abandonment of the belief in human nature as governed by natural, deterministic universal laws. As a consequence of adopting this framework, psychology must abandon its Newtonian model and its criteria of measurement, prediction and control (Hollinger 1994). The deterministic view that human behaviour is formed by social forces or history also needs modification, as it is based on a dichotomy between individual and society.

4.3 Post-structuralism and Post-modernism: a Brief History

In this section I will look briefly at the origins and foundations of post-structuralism and post-modernism with a reference to the philosophical debate between Structuralism, Humanism and Critical Theory in order to clarify some of the founding principles of qualitative methodology and discourse analysis.

Generally speaking, post-structuralism and post-modernism take their name from the two schools of thought they derived from and were both critical of, namely structuralism and modernism. Post-structuralism and post-modernism overlap in many of their fundamental philosophical basis and are often used synonymously.

It has been pointed out that ‘post-modern philosophy’ is not itself a unified discourse, rather the so-called post-modern philosophers are heterogeneous in regard to style, content and concerns (Flax 1990). Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault are perhaps the most influential post-modern writers. The unifying concerns are a shared interest in contemporary Western culture, knowledge (its production and its relation to power), language, power, subjectivity and the self and finally, how to conceptualize, preserve and rescue difference (Flax 1990). In this thesis I will focus on three of the above:

power, language and self/subjectivity and I will explore their relevance in the analysis of text.

Crucial to post-modernism and post-structuralism is structuralism itself, which developed out of the ideas of Comte and Durkheim and has its object of enquiry a formal logic notion of 'structure' which is believed to regulate, and have primacy over, human behaviour and society (Hollinger 1994). This principle was central to Saussure's linguistic theory which proposed that there existed in language a pre-given, fixed structure prior to its realization in speech (Hollway 1989).

Due to the belief of a pre-existing structure which can be investigated beyond its multiple expressions, structuralism holds on to objectivity, strongly opposes humanism and aims at distinguishing science from philosophy (Hollinger 1994). However, some structuralist principles are fundamental to post-structuralism; for instance Saussure's theory of sign and the arbitrary connection between the sign's components: 'signifier' (sound or written word) and 'signified' (meaning) (Weedon 1987). Because their use of language is somehow based on these ideas, both Freud and Lacan have been considered structuralists (Hollway 1989, Hollinger 1994).

Critical Theory flourished in the Frankfurt School in the 1930s. Adorno, Fromm, Horkheimer, Marcuse and more recently Habermas, defended humanism, philosophy and history as the keys to understanding and changing modern societies. These authors, less interested in formal static structures, view the social world and the individual as always in a dynamic situation and in a constant process of 'becoming' (Hollinger 1994).

Post-structuralism takes Saussurean philosophy as a starting point. Saussure believed that there is no natural relation between signifier and signified and that the sign is

totally arbitrary (Potter and Wetherell 1987). He consequently disputed the claim that language can reflect the intrinsic meaning of a 'natural' world, instead believing that meaning is always constituted within language (Weedon 1987). Post-structuralism is generally applied to a range of theoretical positions developed by the work of Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva and Althusser (Weedon 1987). It deconstructs the subject-as-agent and the unitary individual (Hollway 1987).

Considering its origins, it is not surprising that language and issues of power are central to post-structuralism and methodologies derived from it. They are particularly crucial in discourse analysis. Another discipline where language plays a central part is psychoanalysis - the talking cure. It is due to their common focus on language and their belief in a fragmented self that psychoanalysis and post-structuralism have highly influenced current discourse analysis, albeit with crucial differences and tensions.

4.4 Psychoanalysis, Language and the Self

From Freud's metapsychology it transpires that the idea of self is historical, multi-layered and in constant process of dynamic change (Hollway 1987, 1989, Flax 1990). Freudian theory challenges the idea of a unitary self through the notion of the dynamic unconscious (Hollway 1989) and its primary role in determining human action (Frosh 1987). The central concept of Freudian theory is conflict. Both in the topographical and in the structural model (see chapter one), human action is conceptualised as the constantly negotiated result of varying pressures and counter-pressures; in the former between the conscious and the unconscious and between the ego, superego and id in the latter. Rationality, represented by the reality principle, the ego and pressure from society, plays a part in determining human action, but only a

part. In this way the Freudian view offers an alternative to the unitary rational subject (Hollway 1989).

It was Lacan however who paid particular attention to the self in relation to the role of language (for a review of the role of language in Lacan see Henriques 1984 and Mitchell and Rose 1982). Lacan also rejects the modern idea of a unified self as being a dangerous illusion and replaces it with the idea of a multiplicity of transitory selves. According to Lacan it is in the pre-Oedipal play of desires that it is possible to identify the potential basis for resistance to capitalist society (Hollinger 1994). The self is not independent of language, rather it constrains the self in ideological ways. Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida agree with Lacan in defining the self as multiple, not fixed, and always under construction (Hollinger 1994).

These are all in opposition to traditional social psychology, according to which the self is a unitary entity and a relatively autonomous agent in the world which can be described in the same way as a physical object. The assumption behind these theories is that the self is the centre of experience and initiator of action; a coherent whole, separate from other distinct selves. Post-structuralism, on the other hand, questions the dichotomies between individual and society, subject and object.

Despite their increasing popularity, the adoption of post-structuralist ideas in the social sciences has caused much controversy. Two areas are of particular interest to me: the first concerns the danger of political paralysis, particularly in respect of Foucauldian ideas of power and resistance (Smart 1985, Hollinger 1994) and their specific application to feminist issues (see Weedon 1985, Ramazanoglu 1993, Flax 1990). While the Foucauldian idea of power and resistance (Foucault 1971, 1977, 1979), has been criticised as abstract, vague and lacking a unified agency of social change (Smart 1985), it has also been argued that a post-modern approach can foster

greater awareness of how power is both constraining and enabling, thus providing a "greater range of human possibilities for self-constitution and control." (Hollinger 1994:117)

The second point is more specifically concerned with issues of validation in research and dangers of solipsism (Silverman 1993, Burman and Parker 1993). The shift from quantitative to qualitative methods of analysis within a post-structuralist framework, immediately implies the abandonment of positivistic criteria of validation. The question then becomes whether renouncing positivism does away with the idea of validation itself or if this should be replaced with new criteria. Considering that objectivity and replicability are off the agenda, the question is how to distinguish 'good' qualitative research from 'arbitrary' conclusions (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992).

From a post-structuralist perspective, the search for validation is highly problematic as it is in danger of implying a return to absolute foundations of knowledge (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995). On the other hand the neglect in qualitative methodology, of issues of validity and reliability has been strongly criticised and the need for qualitative research to produce generalisable data has been re-affirmed (Silverman 1993). On similar lines, Miles and Huberman (1984) advocate the need for reliability and validity in qualitative research without, however, having to compromise the special contribution of qualitative methodologies in terms of flexibility, contextual sensitivity or external reality (Henwood and Pidgeon 1994).

Henwood and Pidgeon (1995) consider the following as important indicators of the validity of qualitative research: Generativity, which considers whether certain research ideas generate theory and new questions for research; Rhetorical Power, which considers how persuasive and convincing the presented argument is. More specific

to discourse analysis, four techniques (coherence, participants' orientation, new problems, fruitfulness), have been suggested to validate the findings of this type of research (Potter and Wetherell 1987). The criteria of consistency in the explanation of events across accounts has also been put forward to guarantee validity (Brenner 1985). This has, however, been disputed, suggesting that the consistency could be the product of the accounts sharing the same function (Potter and Wetherell 1987).

4.5 Discourse analysis: One or many?

One of the most commonly used working definitions of discourse is "a system of statements which constructs an object" (Parker 1992:5). The term 'discourse analysis', although very recent, has already splintered in many, sometimes quite different, ways of analysing text. Burman and Parker (1993) warn against the danger of pretending that there is a simple method of gathering data and of glossing over the differences between discourse analysts.

These differences are immediately evident when looking at the different terminology used: repertoires, discourses, thematic decompositions are only some of what discourse analysts look for in the text. Are they the same thing or does the employment of one over another carry important implications? I think it must make a difference 'what' the analyst is looking for and for what reason; beyond the purely semantic, some important political implications can derive from these differences. At this stage I will limit myself to examining the common ground between the various approaches, focusing on three issues which I think constitute the main *sine qua non* of discourse analysis: the role of Language, Subjectivity and Power/Ideology.

4.5.1 The Role of Language

Following post-structuralism, discourse analysts believe that language is not a neutral, transparent medium between the social actor and the world, nor a blank window through which the researcher regards the psyche of the subjects (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Discourse analysis makes language the object of enquiry, paying attention not only to the position of statements but also to the function that statements perform beyond the simple communication of information (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Contrary to positivistic methodologies which look solely for consistencies, discourse analysis attributes great significance to variation and contradiction in the accounts given (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1992, Hollway 1989, Burman and Parker 1993). These accounts, constructed out of existing resources, provide the speaker with the possibility of taking various, sometimes contradictory, subject positions within the same text (Hollway 1987). As a consequence, discourse analysis assumes that experience, the self, social and psychological phenomena are all inseparable from the ways they are described within the interactional context. It is assumed that they and their significance, are constructed through the culturally available resources and practices and may vary according to the purpose of the speech (Widdicombe 1993, Burman and Parker 1993).

4.5.2 Subjectivity

From the above, it follows that attention is not on the self-as-entity which performs actions (the 'subject' of the enlightenment), but on the construction of the self. The subject-position the speakers take within these accounts will determine their self at that given moment. Subjectivity, however, cannot be equated with 'individual', nor

with 'self' or 'identity'. I am referring to this term as it has been postulated by Henriques *et al* (1984):

"We use 'subjectivity' to refer to individuality and self-awareness - the condition of being a subject - but understand in this usage that subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to discourses and practices and produced by these - the condition of being 'subject'." (Henriques *et al.* 1984:3)

and to the illuminating definition by Harré and Davis:

"A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire." (Harré and Davies 1990:43)

4.5.3 Power and Ideology

The centrality of power, ideology and knowledge and their relation to discourse is well-known in Foucault's writing (as critiqued by Smart 1985). Foucault did not conceptualize power as an institution nor as a structure, but as a 'multiplicity of force relations'; simultaneously 'intentional' yet 'non-subjective' (Smart 1985:77).

He also argued against privileged sites of opposition to power (eg. the proletariat in Marxist theory), instead he held that where there is power there is resistance and that power depends for its existence on the presence of a 'multiplicity of points of resistance' (Smart 1985). The parallel existence of a network of power relations and forms of resistance does *not* imply that any resistance is already colonised by power and therefore hopeless, but that resistances constitute an irreducible opposite to power relations. Power for Foucault is exercised over free subjects whose conduct exists

within a field of possibilities (Smart 1985:133), which implies that the subject has the possibility of staying out of these power networks and being free.

This voluntarism has been heavily criticised (Henriques *et al.* 1984), particularly within feminist circles. Discourse analysis and psychoanalysis (although using very different frameworks), offer the possibility of looking at what factors militate against change and at the dynamic interplay between resistance to power and resistance to change. This is done in discourse analysis by looking at the meaning and values attached to a person's practices and the power and constraints offered by different subject positions, which allow the person to position themselves in relation to others (Hollway 1984).

From the rejection of a single locus of power or resistance, Foucault's interest moved to investigating the techniques which legitimize power and how these work "at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc." (Foucault as quoted by Smart 1985:79)

Central to a discourse-analytic type of research is the notion that power finds powerful expression in forms of internal regulation, i.e. when forces from 'outside' work as self-discipline from 'within'. Through this form of regulation, discourse produces subject-positions. To follow the production of these discourses and the subject-positions created within them, is to understand the way power unfolds and oppression is perpetrated, as studying ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

4.6 Feminist Research

It has been argued that in so far as politics is a struggle around the power to either perpetuate a given order or to transform it, "*all* research work is 'political' to some extent" (Griffin 1986:188). However, the crucial question is not whether a specific study is defined as political or not, but whether it concerns different notions of objectivity and value-free research (Griffin 1986). Feminist researchers, in agreement with post-structuralism, believe that it is impossible to operate as an objective and value-free researcher (Griffin 1986, Stanley and Wise 1990, Hawkesworth 1989, Harding 1987), in fact a fundamental goal of feminist theory is to analyse gender relations (Flax 1987). This is one of the reasons behind the widespread view that there is a special affinity between feminist research and qualitative methods (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995b).

However, in the same way that it is impossible to use the term 'feminist' as a unitary category reflecting a consistent set of beliefs or even a coherent social identity (Griffin 1989, 1995, Ussher 1991), even less can one assume of a coherent category when talking about feminist researchers. I will briefly address some of the issues at stake in order to clarify my own feminist standpoint.

To start with, three major types of feminist epistemology have been identified (Hawkesworth 1989, Harding 1987, 1991, Henwood and Pidgeon 1995b): feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory and feminist post-modernism (see Allen and Baber 1992 for a review). Feminist empiricism does not question the mainstream positivistic practices, but argues for a critical reconsideration of the androcentric interpretations made (Harding 1987).

Feminist standpoint theory claims that class, race, and gender structure a person's understanding of reality (Allen and Baber 1992). Feminist standpoint research (FSR), pivots around three major points: 1) it focuses on women's experience as a basis for

the research; 2) it argues that the 'personal' is also political; 3) it includes a reflexive perspective which considers all research as a part of a knowledge validation process which has tended to reflect the concerns of dominant groups (Griffin 1995). Standpoint theorists also advocate the intrinsic liberating potential of an uncritical acceptance of women's ways of knowing and being (Harding 1987).

Feminist post-modernists on the other hand are sceptical about claims of a single truth or reality and question the existence of a unitary category of woman (Allen and Baber 1992, Henwood and Pidgeon 1995b, Flax 1987); hence they reject the notion of one privileged standpoint and do not consider gender as the only factor determining women's experience and identity (Allen and Baber 1992).

I agree with the overall political attitude held by FSR and support the need for a greater awareness of gender issues (as well as those of class, race, sexual orientation and disability). I also agree with the need for research *for* women instead of *on* women which will create space for women's voices to be expressed. However, I am also sympathetic to some criticisms of FSR. My main contention is regarding the proposal to 'see through women's eyes' which implies the existence of a reality existing outside the observer, as if there were some truth that could be discovered. One of the implications of this stance, it could be argued, is that positivism is not problematic as long as the observation is carried out from a 'politically correct' stance.

In this respect I would identify myself as a post-modern feminist in that I view with suspicion any claim to an intrinsically privileged or 'truer' viewpoint. Nonetheless, I share a concern for the risks of relativism inherent in post-modernism and the possible fragmentation of any sense of solidarity and group struggle; I also have

reservations about the post-modern denial of history which makes these things possible.

In conclusion, I strongly agree with the need for a deconstruction of the category 'women' as a unitary and coherent entity, but I do advocate for 'women' as a socially and politically constructed category based on a common experience of oppression (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995b), albeit constructed from multiple and differing material circumstances for different women (Stanley and Wise, 1990).

4.7 Summary and Conclusion

I have used this chapter to bridge the theoretical framework of this thesis (as outlined in part one), with the actual research and analysis which will follow (chapters six to ten). I have illustrated the personal, theoretical and epistemological foundation of the research as a whole. In the following chapters I will look at each stage of my research separately and in depth: in the next chapter I will give a detailed outline of the stages of the analysis, in chapters six to ten I will discursively analyse women's reports of shame through a thematic deconstruction using principles from grounded theory. I will be looking at a selection of extracts to investigate issues of power and resistance, subjectivity and the exciting tension between a psychoanalytic and a discourse-analytic reading of text.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Thematic Decomposition: A Discursive analysis

5.0 Introduction

This chapter bridges the issues raised in chapter four on methodology with the discursive analysis of the interviews, deconstructed into themes. The chapter outlines my argument, my method of analysis and also provides a summary of research questions and findings. The section on method follows the stages of the research from the design of the semi-structured interviews and the selection of the participants, through the coding of interviews, the selection and analysis of the themes, to a summary of the findings of the analysis.

This chapter also discusses some of the difficulties encountered in the analysis; for example, how to reconcile important biographical details of the participants with an approach to people's accounts as text; how to conduct a discursive analysis without clear guidelines; how to reconcile an intrapsychic psychoanalytic reading with a deconstructive approach and finally, how to address issues of power in a feminist research on women.

5.1 My Argument

Contrary to a positivistic or psychoanalytic approach, I maintain that, a) shame does not exist in a vacuum or as a measurable thing 'out there', and b) that neither is shame exclusively an intrapsychic affect.

Instead I want to claim that the subject position of 'shameful' is multifaceted, contradictory and constantly negotiated. This negotiation takes place intrapsychically and within the context of speech. This happens, a) within different, socially constructed discourses or 'ideological themes' (e.g. being naked on a beach can be constructed as source of pride within a feminist-militant discourse or as shameful within a catholic discourse), b) within the mutual interaction between interviewer-interviewee and c) can vary at different points within the same interaction. In other words shame, like identity, is negotiated through speech (Widdicombe 1993).

Broadly speaking, the aim of my analysis is to reconnect the shame themes to existing social discourses. In this way I intend to remove the interviewee's accounts from the personal sphere and reposition them within a social, interpersonal framework, thereby making evident the 'ideology in action' latent in the accounts (Wetherell and Potter 1992, Hollway 1989).

5.2 METHOD

5.2.1 The Semi-structured Interviews

I have already described in chapter four the stages of development of the interview schedule⁵ and its genesis in the pilot study. As is evident from the interview schedule, the hypotheses and the rating instructions, my original idea was to conduct

⁵ (see Appendix 3 for the list of interview questions, Appendix 4 for the list of hypotheses underpinning the questions and Appendix 5 for the instructions to raters.)

a content analysis of the text which would result in measures and quantities (see Introduction for a reflexive history of this research).

Following the Pilot Study, while designing the final interview schedule, I focused on three factors: a) to design questions in such an order and style that the discussion would flow logically and would be as relaxed as possible, b) to move back and forth between the literature, the transcripts of the pilot study interviews and the questions, so that the questions would be both theoretically and experientially grounded, and c) to design a way of rating which did not just count words, nor took the text at simple face-value but was rooted in and took seriously what the women had said (Griffin 1986). I found Brown *et al.*'s work (1986, 1990a, 1990b) on depression and self-esteem in women extremely useful for their approach to interview style and measurement issues.

I told the participants that I was carrying out research on shame, that the interview would be taped. To reassure them of the confidentiality of the process, I stressed that I would use pseudonyms in the transcriptions and, that when appearing in my thesis the interviews would be in the form of extracts which, once extrapolated from the main text, would make the identification of the participant virtually impossible.

I also told the participants that they could stop the interview or the tape if and when they desired. I told them before starting the recording that the interview would last between 40 minutes and one hour, depending on how much they wanted to tell me and that I would start with some general questions about themselves and their lives and would then move on to some questions about shame. I also told them that we would have some time after the interview to discuss their experience and that I would welcome any feedback they would like to give me.

The pilot interviews, where the participants were friends of mine, were conducted at either their or my house. The interviews with friends of friends took place at their houses with the exception of two which were carried out at the common friend's house. The interviews with post-graduate students were carried out at UCL, in a quiet, sound-proof room with a 'Do not disturb sign on the door'.

5.2.2 The Participants

The participants were eighteen women between the ages of 25 and 36 years old, with the exception of one who was 47. Two participants were black, six were non-British, three of whom came from non-english speaking countries. All of the women were able-bodied and when talking about their sexuality, exclusively made reference to themselves as heterosexual.

Although some of the participants were from working class backgrounds, their various occupations (two social-workers, art therapist, musician, accountant, clerk, journalist, film-maker, teacher), indicated a level of education typical of the middle classes. All the others were post-graduate students, mostly in psychology.

The first participants who took part in the pilot study were close friends. The others were either friends of friends or post-graduate students at UCL. Most of them volunteered to be interviewed because they were interested in the subject.

5.2.2.1 The Pseudonyms; Biography or Text?

Having committed myself to using pseudonyms, the issue of what to call my participants turned out to be no simple task. I first used names which were selected for practical reasons; i.e. they bore some resemblance to the real names to help me recognise the extracts once they were isolated from the whole interview. My concern that I wasn't sufficiently approaching the extracts as text (as I felt I should), made me later abandon the names altogether and number the extracts. This was motivated by a desire to explore shame not as a personal experience, but through its construction in language via ideological repertoires or accounts which we all share. Therefore I wanted the accounts, rather than the individual experience, to be the focus of my investigation. Furthermore, by making the accounts the focus of my analysis I would leave no doubt that the interpretive reading of them was mine and not the participants'.

However, once I had done that, I felt that the participant as a real person and her real suffering was lost. I finally settled for pseudonyms which either conveyed some personal detail - like reference to non-British origins - or carried some association for me which would bring the person to life.

The question of names however, raises a much wider epistemological issue: if I take the stance that language is not a transparent window into the participant's psyche and that a discursive analysis has to be conducted at the level of text, what space is left for the participants' histories and biographies after 'the death of the subject' (Foucault 1972, 1973b, 1984)? As I have mentioned in the Introduction and will discuss further in chapter nine, a move to a constructivist approach implies that everything we talk about, including our identities, are manufactured through discourse. However, this carries the danger of falling into an essentialist view that leaves very little space for dimensions which are nevertheless crucial to political change. For example, how can we talk of change if we seem to afford more agency

to discourse than to people? (Burr 1995). It might be, as Frosch (1991) seems to suggest, that we are in a phase of transition and that some of the difficulties we encounter in conceptualising what we do as social constructivists engaged in discourse analysis, are due to remnants of modernist language which clash with a post-structuralist approach. Therefore, in psychoanalysis for example, we still use notions like progress, or self development which do carry modernist implications of unitary subject and history. I am certainly concerned about the possible political implications of abandoning aspirations to change, progress and making sense of history altogether. I therefore agree with the position that although subjectivity is constituted by discourse, the subject is yet capable of critical historical reflection and is able to exercise some choice with respect to the discourses and practices that it takes up (Sawicki 1990). This position prevents the possibility of reifying discourses (Burman and Parker 1993), conceptualising them as if they were 'tectonic plates' whose clashes constitute subjectivity in a way that leaves no room for agency (Parker et al. 1990); a position which might lead to social practices being constructed as if operating in mysterious ways, with the danger of removing them from real life (Burman and Parker 1993).

If we think of our political stance as commitment to 'giving voice' in order to provide some legitimacy and validity (Kitzinger 1989) to people's 'real experiences', it is necessary to allow space for issues like class, ethnic origins, race, disability and sexual orientation. These are fundamental constitutive factors which, however, we are in danger of losing sight of when we look at the subject at the level of text with one specific focus.

There was no doubt in my mind that all the elements in the participants' history had constructed them as they were, but my focus was gender. I found it very difficult, therefore, to allow space for the other dimensions when the participants did not

address them directly. My political conviction that these dimensions are of crucial importance in people's lives, directed the choice of extracts. Albeit in a tokenistic way, I attempted to give voice to these dimensions by selecting names and extracts which, when possible, would include dimensions other than gender. For example the extract from Ambra (chapter seven) highlights issues of ethnic origins and race, and so does her name; in the extract from Dawn (chapter ten) I look at class, with Mae (chapter nine) I include details of her relationship with her mother which I felt enhanced the understanding of the text. Nevertheless a lot is inevitably lost when renouncing a biographical approach to text.

5.2.3 The Coding of the Interviews

I listened to the taped interviews before transcribing them, as that helped me to hold the interview in my mind as a whole. I then listened to them again after transcription to check the accuracy of the written text and many, many times afterwards when working on the themes, to double-check the accuracy of the text. In the long, painstaking process of transcribing, I noted pauses but I did not measure the time gap (for transcription convention see Appendix 8).

To bridge the theory with the research questions, I broke the literature down into its various themes and dimensions from the beginning. I kept index cards with the articles' and books' summaries divided into different sections. The resulting number of categories were then collapsed under larger headings and used as a general guideline for the first set of interviews in the pilot study. The first general outline contained eight dimensions: words and feelings associated to shame, experience of shame, what shame does, content of shame experience, defences and coping strategies, shame anxiety, shaming agents, shame and guilt.

As previously described, I reviewed the list of dimensions and related questions after each interview until I felt I was getting some consistency and the participants were generally addressing the same issues. At that stage, some areas of proposed investigation were abandoned and others, suggested by the participants, were added. Priority was thus given to the participants' choice of relevant areas, so that subjects that did not match the participants' accounts were deleted even if they were considered important in the literature.

Each interview was line-numbered and laboriously examined, linking words, phrases and paragraphs to the above main headings (for an example see Appendix 6). At the same time I also added comments if something struck me as important or if I had noticed it before in another interview. Having done that, I read the coding for all the interviews and collated the content for each heading.

Patterns began to appear, although of two kinds: on one hand there was a relatively straightforward pattern which related to the 'shame scenario' (see Introduction and Appendix three and four) which could have been developed further into a content analysis. But there were also patterns of a much more fragmented and complex nature which required a more interpretative examination.

It has been pointed out how the identification of discourses can in fact be aided by content analysis (Mostyn 1985, Parker 1992) and I would certainly agree. However, the analysis of data I had in mind was very different from the traditional content analysis which aims at allocating instances to a set of predefined, mutually exclusive categories (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992). Furthermore in my case, because the categories were based on gender-biased literature reflecting the dominant culture, I felt there was a danger of reinforcing 'common sense' constructions of shame (Potter *et al.* 1990, Parker 1992). To avoid this and to allow myself to concentrate on

patterns of a much more complex and fragmented nature requiring a more interpretative examination, I had to face the constant doubts inherent in having nothing else to start with but my own intuition (Hollway 1989).

I thus began the process of thematic deconstruction again, indexing the data partly on the basis of the previous coding. This time however, there were two important differences: firstly I paid attention to the whole story in terms of how women experienced shame (eg. the content of the experience, women's reaction to it, what other emotions were mentioned, ways of reacting, coping, talking about it), even when they started by mentioning shame and then seemed to move away from it. Secondly, I did not look for consistency but for contradictions (Parker 1992, Potter and Wetherell 1987) and for the function and the position of the words. This was done to conceptualise new ways of understanding women's accounts of shame which listens to women's real accounts, rather than the sanitised versions.

5.2.4 The Themes

The themes were content-based and inductively selected from the interviews. The themes were not equally sized, constant units; some are broader than others and all of the themes overlap and are inter-related. I selected extracts which clustered around the following five themes: 'Shame and the Ideal', 'Femininity and Shame', 'Withdrawal as Defence against Shame', 'The Shameful Self behind the Facade', 'Shame of the Victim'.

The Ideal theme was based mostly on the answers to questions relating to self and self-esteem (see Appendix 3,4,5). The Femininity theme was based on the questions regarding gender, the actual content of shameful experiences and other fragments

which came up spontaneously in the interview. The Withdrawal theme was based on the questions regarding coping strategies and defences. The theme of the Façade was partially based on the questions on coping strategies, but it often transpired from the participants talking about how they felt about themselves. The only theme which was not based on any specific set of questions, but was repeatedly referred to, was the theme on Shame of the Victim.

Although these general themes will be addressed as separate sections, this is for the sake of presentation only, as all of the themes overlap and are interlinked. For instance, an account of hiding one's body in shame has significance within the theme of failing to have an ideal body, within the theme of construction of femininity and also that of hiding and withdrawal as defence.

5.2.5 The Analysis: A Thematic Decomposition

My approach to the analysis of text is based on the general principles of Grounded Theory as introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It is used in two ways: to invoke the general notion of grounding theory in experience and accounts and more specifically when referring to a method which involves distinctive analytic strategies (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995). In analyzing the data I will be using Grounded Theory in both ways.

The application of Grounded Theory starts with a repeated and in-depth reading of the text for the purpose of generating categories to make sense of initially unstructured qualitative data. These categories are then defined and the relationship between them is explored. This eventually results in the creation of new hypotheses and theory. Grounded Theory attempts at 'realism' on the one hand, through

inductively reflecting participants' accounts and 'constructivism' on the other, through encouraging interpretive processes (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, 1994, 1995).

This position, however, has been considered problematic as it ends up not adequately addressing the philosophical underpinnings which such an approach carries. For example, theory cannot simply emerge from data, as observation is always set in pre-existing concepts (Henwood and Pidgeon 1994). As a solution to this problem, Charmaz (1990) introduced a constructivist version of Grounded Theory which assumes the pre-existence of the researcher's perspective from which they actively build their analysis.

My analysis of the data started with what has been termed a 'thematic decomposition', a close reading which attempts to separate a given text into coherent themes or stories." (Stenner 1993:114). This employs a constructivist approach in grounding theory on shame in women's accounts of their experiences using a 'flip-flop' technique (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995), between data and conceptualisation (Bulmer 1979).

5.2.6 A Discursive Analysis

This analysis did not attempt to be representative and in fact by choosing this kind of analysis, I implicitly chose not to investigate how often women mentioned certain aspects of shame, but 'what' they said and 'how' they talked about it (van Dijk 1993), i.e. how the themes developed discursively.

What follows in chapters six to ten is a discursive analysis of a number of the accounts within these themes. In analyzing these accounts, I will look at the process through which the women position themselves as shameful.

The analysis has three aims: First I will explore the multifaceted and variable meaning of the 'shameful subject' and how being shameful is constructed within the themes. This rests on the view that discourses constitute objects and contain subjects (Parker 1990, 1992; Burman & Parker 1993)

Second, by looking at the subject positions taken within the accounts, I will explore issues of power and resistance i.e. what that particular subject position enables and prevents women from doing, on what ideological constructions it rests, what function it serves, how the experience of shame can be a site of resistance and/or subordination/conformity. This rests on a view of discourses as reproducing power relations and achieving ideological effects (Parker 1990a, 1992).

Thirdly I will explore the similarities and tensions between using a psychoanalytic and a discourse analytic approach to the text, in particular vis-a-vis psychic and social change. In particular I will investigate how psychoanalysis can function as a discourse in itself, thus allowing specific positions to women. This rests on a Foucauldian interest in the objectification and subjectification of medical discourses (Foucault 1973a).

In setting myself the above aims I am using discursive analysis as a goal in itself - in applying this method to the exploration of women's shame - and as a strategy with the goal of exploring ideological and power issues. The reason for this choice of method rests on the potential of discourse analysis to act as ideology critique and to provide alternative discourses (Burman and Parker 1993, Parker 1992). This project

is based on the assumption that different discourses carry with them different prescriptions for social relations and that those alternative discourses that both re-describe and provide a critical distance from language and power are also the basis for alternative social relations, alternative societal forms (Parker 1992:40). More specifically, this analysis aims at contributing to feminist research, by attempting to make explicit the ideological implications of the positions taken by the women in the text, while at the same time suggesting alternative, more constructive subject positions available to women. The first step towards personal change is to recognise the discourses - and the positions provided by them - that are currently shaping our subjectivity (Burr 1995).

5.2.6.1 Which Discourse Analysis?

It has been repeatedly stressed that doing discourse analysis is not easy; it is a painstaking process and can be very frustrating and anxiety-provoking (Burman & Parker 1993, Potter & Wetherell 1987, Parker 1992). This is partly due to the impossibility of describing it adequately in 'recipe-type' form, which makes discourse analysis 'an approach to research', rather than a particular method or technique (Burr 1995:163). Some authors have attempted to provide some guidelines for doing discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987), but because the nature of discourse analysis itself is subjective and interpretative, there is still no definitive version of it. To some extent, this lack of clear guidelines has been considered as positive, in warding off the dangers of "reducing analytic sensitivity to discourse to just another thoughtless empirical technique" (Parker 1992:122).

I have already mentioned in chapter four, how the term 'discourse analysis' has already splintered into many, sometimes quite different ways of analyzing text. Burr

(1995) identifies two main approaches to the study of 'discourse': One draws primarily upon the French philosophical traditions of structuralism and post-structuralism and focus on issues of identity, personal and social change and power relations (Hollway 1989, Parker 1992, Weedon 1987). The other approach focuses more on the performative qualities of discourse, i.e. what are people doing with their talk, how accounts are constructed and their consequences for the speaker (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Edwards and Potter 1992).

The version of discourse analysis I will be using looks at text from both perspectives and is influenced by a mixture of different approaches. I will be focusing on the function of language and its relation to ideology (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1992), but with some reservations. I am wary of some semi-positivistic, liberal implications in asserting that discourses are 'out there' and that people 'freely choose' which to use (Wetherell and Potter 1992, Marks 1993). Although I agree that we all use the same existing resources to construct our talk (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Marshall and Rabe 1993), I think that we are all imprisoned by language (Marks 1993) and that we favour some subject positions over others because they have positive implication for our sense of self and self-esteem (Burman and Parker 1993) - i.e. they contain higher narcissistic supplies (Sandler 1963). They may provide a sense of being in harmony with the world as it is represented by 'common sense' (see Weedon 1994 for an illustration of the presentation of ideological situations as 'common sense') and because they supply us with more power in relation to others (Hollway 1987). These are obviously always relative and contextual which accounts for contradictions in speech (Potter and Wetherell 1987).

I would also stress the importance of distinguishing between discourse analysis which is "effectively functioning as ideology-critique and traditional positivist methods

masquerading as discourse analysis" (Burman and Parker 1993:11). I would like to position myself in the former group as my political motivation in deconstructing shame is to identify the process through which oppression becomes internal regulation and self-discipline; in other words to explore the self-oppression involved in taking the subject position of shameful. The political aim of this thesis is therefore to 'remake the link' with the historically gendered and social source of shame. I believe that this process, by suspending the common sense status quo, can open the way to the conceptualisation of 'new ideals' and feelings of pride in women's experience. This is what I see as my contribution to feminist research.

This kind of reflexive inquiry rests on the disbelief in neutrality and objectivity which underpins positivistic research. It can also be helpful in avoiding the illusion of a 'blank screen' researcher; an illusion which would render invisible certain extremely interesting information which develops out of the interplay between interviewer and interviewee. Therefore I distance myself from some discourse analysis that clearly leaves out the role of the interviewer, or at least does not explore their influence on the dialogue (see Wetherell and Potter 1992).

5.2.7 A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Text

In parallel to the discourse analysis, I will also explore the text from a psychoanalytic point of view. This requires some brief clarifications, both in terms of similarities and differences between psychoanalytic and discourse analytic approach to text, some of which I have already discussed in chapter four, and in methodological terms: i.e. in what way a psychoanalytic reading of the text enriched and added depth to the analysis.

Broadly speaking, I intend to use psychoanalytic theory discursively, in that it attributes specific meaning to speech. As with any other discourse, this activity has consequences. Some of these consequences are reflected in the subject positions it makes available. It is these subject positions and the meaning which is attributed to phenomena, in this case shame, that I will focus on.

Generally speaking, both a psychoanalytic and a discourse analytic approach encourages us to listen to text, whether written, spoken or acted, on a different level (Parker 1992, Burman 1992). Furthermore, both offer the possibility of looking at what factors militate against change and at the dynamic interplay between resistance to power and resistance to change (Hollway 1984, Eichenbaum & Orbach 1983).

I propose the psychoanalytic reading exclusively as a hypothetical exercise of deconstruction of what the women said *as text*; as such the suggested psychoanalytic reading of what the participant said is not considered to carry any validity or insight into the speaker's psychic life. A psychoanalytic interpretation, I believe, belongs to the therapeutic relationship in the consulting room; it ought always to be contextual and draw its meaning and significance from within the interaction between patient and therapist. This meaning cannot be extrapolated from the context as the same 'material' could mean completely different things according to the different phases of the therapeutic relationship, within the same session, within the patient's life span.

Furthermore (also similar to discourse analysis), I believe that meaning is negotiated within the specific patient/therapist relationship and is heavily constructed by the analyst's understanding of it. Therefore, to attempt a similar approach under any

other circumstances, but using the same tools of analytic interpretation claiming access to people's psyche, I strongly believe to be unethical and meaningless.⁶

On the other hand, psychoanalysis is a powerful tool in understanding the intrapsychic dynamics through which interpsychic constructions of reality and power relations become operative from 'within' and contribute to the formation of the 'docile subject'. This is a crucial point as psychoanalysis used in this context could provide an answer to the question biography vs. text inherent in the discrepancy between traditional psychology and a discourse analytic mode of inquiry. Social psychology takes into account people's identities and history, by looking at the unitary subject with personality traits, affected but separate from society. On the other hand discourse analysis, moving away from the interest in individual subjects as active agents and focusing on text, leaves little space for the historical personal context which also constructs the subject.

A psychoanalytic approach used alongside a discursive analysis of text might allow a way out of this impasse in suggesting that "... meanings are given in discourses, [but] they are also imbued with significance by the sedimented history (held on the metaphoric axis) of a particular person occupying the position at a given time." (Hollway 1984:128)

Similar to discourse analysis, psychoanalytic practice considers speech as having functions and performing actions beyond communication. For instance, a patient's dream could be a communication of unconscious material, or could be used to represent a transference relation or could be used as resistance by avoiding pressing

⁶ Some very interesting research has been carried out based on discursively analyzing extracts from psychotherapy sessions (Madill 1995, Madill and Doherty 1994)

conflicts. Hence it is not sufficient to pay attention to the content of the communication, but also to the function which often constitutes important communication per se. However, while the therapeutic relationship allows space for the exploration of such communication through the analysis of transference and resistance, the researcher-participant relationship rarely considers such elements as important. This brings me to an important area related to qualitative research, which has only recently begun to be addressed.

5.2.7.1 The Researcher/participant Relationship

The understanding of the experience of research from the point of view of both the participant and the researcher has increasingly been acknowledged to be a fundamental facet of the qualitative research process (see King 1995 for a review and in-depth discussion). In particular, feminist researchers have argued for the importance of paying attention to issues which research reports do not usually comment on, like the social/personal characteristics of those doing the interviewing, the interviewee's feelings about being interviewed and about the interview, or the interviewer's feelings about the interviewees (Oakley 1981a).

At the same time attention has been drawn to the need to redress the power inequalities between researcher and participant (Gergen and Gergen, 1991). This issue has become of particular relevance when as a feminist interviewing women, the researcher wants to convey her intention not to exploit either the participants or the information they give. An increased closeness and the shifting from pure data-gathering to friendship, has sometimes been advocated as a solution in that it would allow not only to redress the power imbalance, but also foster a shift from the interviewer being a data-collecting instrument for researchers, to being a data-

collecting instrument for those whose lives are being researched (Oakley 1981a:49). This implies that interviews might be carried out in such a way that the participants as well as the researcher can benefit from it.

Although the goal of equalizing the power balance and empowering women through the research process is positively motivated, the realization of the objective is highly problematic (Allen & Baber 1992). In particular, as I will discuss later, I am concerned with the possibility of it becoming abusive.

I definitely recognise elements in my approach to interviewing in common with Oakley's stance (as above) and with Harding's argument for the researcher to place herself on the same critical plane as the overt subject matter (Harding 1987); this would require evidence about the class, race and gender of the researcher to be made as visible as that of the participant. This I did mainly through sharing some of my personal details. All the participants knew that I was Italian and that I was doing post-graduate research in Psychology. The majority of participants knew that I was a therapist. The participants to the pilot study certainly knew because they were my friends and with them, as I have already described in chapter four, I discussed in depth their emotional reaction to my questions.

The other participants (some of whom were friends of friends), may have known that I was a therapist, in which case I assume it had some influence, although I can't say of what kind and I did not explore the issue with them. This is because I felt that to clearly state my profession would have implied that I was approaching the interview primarily as a therapist, which I was not. I did not feel it was appropriate, neither did I desire to make any interpretation and I assiduously avoided any comment which might be taken to be one. On the other hand, the fact that I am a psychotherapist inevitable influenced the research process both in that my profession affects the way

I view the world and that I was approaching the research from a psychoanalytic theoretical framework.

Beside being a psychotherapist, however, there were other aspects of my personality and history that I felt construed the specific interaction between my subjects and myself. The fact that I was a fellow-student, for instance, facilitated the process and redressed to a certain extent the power imbalance. To be interviewing other research students meant that they knew through experience something of the difficulties of the process.

Another helpful factor with some of the participants, was that I was foreign and that English is not my first language. Not only it helped in reducing the their self-consciousness of being interviewed in a foreign language, but also, particularly with the women coming from latin or catholic backgrounds, it enabled me to capture subtle nuances which I was able to bring out in the interview where relevant. Furthermore, especially during the pilot interviews, I did share my opinions with the interviewees after the interview and discussed with them some of the feelings which had been brought up.

Feminist researchers have highlighted the importance of 'feelings' in contrast to the traditional focus on 'facts' when inquiring into women's experience (Hollway 1983, 1989, Crawford *et al.* 1992). It is in order to meet the extra demands involved in dealing with the feelings elicited by the interview, that some authors have argued for the usefulness of counselling skills in interview situations (Coyle *et al.* 1994, King 1995). It is in this respect that the need for ongoing supervision and an awareness of some of the psychodynamic processes associated with in-depth interviews have been recommended (King 1995).

In my research I was certainly greatly helped by my skills as a therapist, both in containing the emotional tension created in the interview process and by my use of basic counselling tools (mirroring, open questions, prompts, encouragement to free associate). I also volunteered to discuss the interviews at a later stage if the participants needed to. In some cases that did happen and I was gratified that the interview had been useful for the participants in that, through our discussion, they were able to clarify their own thoughts and emotions. I also offered the participants access to the transcripts and so far, two have requested a copy of their interview transcription.

However, it is also crucial to deconstruct the myth of a given unity and alliance between researchers and participants, just because (in this case) they are both women and to bear in mind the unpleasant reality that women too are capable of domination and exploitation (Allen & Baber 1992).

It is therefore crucial to question whether striving for intimacy is exclusively benign and positive for the interviewees. My concern remains that if we display warmth, empathy and genuineness, all important factors to create a safe environment for the participant, we can expect to develop closer relationships with our participants, but how much can we truly offer that? (King 1995). In other words, the increased openness between participant and researcher might increase the possibility of unwittingly abusing or damaging the participant.⁷

Furthermore - and this is the focus of my concern - by creating a space for the participant to open up and by encouraging them to discuss their emotional reactions,

⁷ Bahvani (1988, 1990) has made some interesting remarks on issues of empowerment in qualitative research, questioning the assumption that 'giving a voice' is automatically empowering for the participant.

aren't we to some degree creating a pseudo-counselling situation, without, however, the safety of the real counselling situation? King (1995), for example, describes instances when both she and her participants found themselves facing issues far beyond the scope of the research because the interview process had stirred up memories, powerful feelings and sometimes intimate revelations. Often the researcher has no skills or resources to deal with such issues and, more to the point, neither does the participant who may be left with re-opened wounds. The question is then, what are the ethical boundaries of some qualitative research?

Without aiming to find an answer to this question, my own experience has certainly prompted me to reflect on these issues. I feel that there are issues of power which cannot be redressed even in the best possible situations. The interview develops according to its own pace and although I mentioned above that the participants' opening up was facilitated by my counselling skills, the question remains whether it necessarily helps the participant to get in touch with their emotions in a interview setting? The fact that the participant might learn something about themselves and find the interview stimulating does not detract from the fact that those disclosures are mainly, if not exclusively for the benefit of the researcher and that once the interview starts developing, particularly if the interviewer is skilled, the participants might end up in a position of extreme vulnerability and openness which certainly is not matched by the researcher's. From this perspective then, counselling skills, although providing a more subtle and sensitive approach, might result in a more subtle, but perhaps more damaging abuse.

In conclusion I feel that the conscious and unconscious effects that my personality, my position as psychology student, my accent, my physical appearance or my general way of interacting had on the process are ultimately unknown to me, as they lie in the realm of the fantasies and the transference which are always created when two

human beings interact. In this respect again, I see a similarity with the patient/therapist relationship in that each one is unique and the story is always a joint production (Mishler, 1986).

5.2.8 Research Questions and Findings

I will now outline in turn the research questions underpinning each theme and the findings proposed by my analysis. These themes will be fully explored in chapters six to ten.

The first theme "Shame and the Ideal" looks at shame as deriving from the failure to meet an ideal. This theme posits the question: if we challenge the view that failing to meet an ideal is exclusively a personal, intrapsychic issue (as psychoanalysis would claim), and also reject the view that ideals are 'out there' as neutral constructs (as implied by social psychology), what do we learn from looking instead at ideals as embedded in social ideological discourses. Within this framework how can we understand the subject position of shameful when falling short of an ideal?

My argument is that, far from being neutral, ideals are historical constructs heavily charged with meaning. Their legitimation rests on ideological practices which mask them as natural, neutral and 'common-sense'. The capacity to fit in with society's ideals grants people a sense of being 'right' and increases their self-esteem and well-being. On the contrary, when the women could not fulfil an ideal they felt ashamed and bad about themselves.

The first finding of this theme is that, for the women interviewed, not meeting ideals had serious implications for their self-esteem and was expressed in terms of negative

self-evaluation. In this way, by positioning themselves as shameful they imply that it is their personal failing or inadequacy rather than the impossibility or intrinsically contradictory nature of the ideal, thus further legitimatizing the ideals.

The second finding is connected to the rhetorical devices and strategies used to construct this theme. In particular I highlight how the participants, in constructing their accounts, rely on a dualistic discourse which separates individual and society, victim and perpetrators.

The third point is connected to contradictions present in speech. For example, one of the participants talked of how being naked on a beach could be constructed as both a source of pride - within a feminist-militant discourse - and of shame - within a catholic discourse. In other words, each of these discourses makes available different positions. I illustrate through the analysis of the text first how the position of shameful is a negotiated product and second, that the positions are not equivalent in that they carry different implications in terms of self-image and self-worth.

The question underpinning the second theme "Femininity and Shame" is: Are female sexuality and the female body shameful and if so, how is the shameful body constructed in speech?

My aim in this theme was to investigate how the participants' way of accounting for positioning themselves as shameful functions as 'practical ideology' and contributes to the reproduction of female stereotypes. I found that the participants used the construction of their bodies and their sexuality as shameful in order to justify their experience of themselves as shameful. Through a discursive analysis of their accounts I was able to examine 'femininity' as actual practice rather than in theoretical terms.

I found, similar to the previous theme, that the whole construction of femininity is full of contradictions and that women employ specific strategies to make sense of these contradictions. For example, in one extract I found that the participant was using a dichotomy between the presentation of her body as resembling that of a teenager (source of pride) while actually being 47 years old (source of shame). The participant used a rhetoric of 'choice' and 'care of herself' to justify the two constructions of her body. In this way, I argued, the normal body of 47 is presented as a defect which has to be corrected to be acceptable, thus reinforcing stereotypes of female beauty. On the other hand, the same strategy also shows how individually the participant is struggling to maintain a positive self-image in the absence of alternative, more realistic discourses of the female body.

This led me to another finding, particularly evident in the theme of shame and female sexuality, but applicable to some extent to all of the themes: women's resistance. Women construct their accounts in a way that allows them to find some space for resistance to the negative evaluation implied in patriarchal discourses. Unfortunately this often highlights the comparative lack of alternative discourses. For example, one participant attempted to resist the notion of female sexuality as shameful by making use of strategies which at the same time also reproduce traditional ideological repertoires on women. I suggest that the lack of alternative representations of femininity which do not position women as 'other' to men, and the changing and contradictory image of what a woman is, might contribute to women's difficulties in developing a positive sense of identity. I also connect this to women's frequent complaint of an erosion of their self-esteem, confusion about their worth and a pervasive uncertainty about their 'being in the world'.

In the following theme, "Defences against Shame: Withdrawal and Silence", I ask whether women's positioning themselves as shameful also plays an ideological

function. If we accept that versions of facts are constructed in speech to accomplish certain social action and to exclude competing versions, the question is, what function is performed by women's accounts of their avoidance and silence when presented as protective measures to prevent exposure of their shameful self? I found that often women use these accounts to avoid alternative positions of being angry, competitive or powerful. Thus positioning themselves as shameful warrants their withdrawal from otherwise having to face a situation of conflict.

An example of this is provided by one participant, who was ashamed and proud at the same time for being very good at school. This situation presented conflicts at two levels: the envy and attack from her peer group for being a 'goody-goody', and the guilt of being better than her older brother who was in the same class. Positioning herself as shameful and deciding from then on not to be too good at school, saved her from the conflictual situations. I therefore look at the shameful subject and the supposedly defensive strategy of withdrawal and silence, as a device to avoid conflicts around wider cultural issues of competition and women's access to power.

I suggest that although silence and withdrawal might provide the individual women with a temporary solution to conflict, these strategies also have serious implications in terms of women's complicity with reproducing what has always been an 'acceptable', but highly limiting and self-destructive view of women. The following two themes develop this argument and question that this type of strategy might not be very successful at an individual level either.

The theme "The Shameful Self behind the Facade" looks further into self-protective strategies, in particular that of hiding behind a facade. This strategy rests on the dualistic split between the external public self, representing women in their competent and successful actions (constructed as the 'facade') and the internal experience,

representing women as faulty, inferior, shameful, inadequate, which is constructed as the 'true self'.

The question underlying this theme is whether it is possible to understand differently why the participants attribute the possibility of rejection to their unlovability based on positioning themselves as shameful and inadequate. My aim is to remove this dilemma from the personal sphere and re-connect it to the broader social issues to which it alludes. In particular I link the facade to the social construction of woman as 'other' to man, and how in the absence of a representation of her value 'per se', women might conform to roles and expectations which makes them acceptable.

I also stress in this theme how this continuous refusal to identify with a self that is strong and successful might have allowed the women to cope, but has also prevented something from developing. In other words, the facade might protect the self from negative attribution from the outside, but also prevents the positive, hidden qualities on the inside to express themselves; the inadequate position does not allow women to make a statement of their value. Furthermore, it encourages women to value themselves according to their capacity to please others, rather than looking after themselves and their needs.

In the final theme "Shame of the Victim", I pull all the threads together and ask the question whether this type of analysis of women's accounts of shame has any practical significance for women. In this final section I argue that the solutions identified in the previous themes - ultimately that women construct shame as a reflection of personal faults - have a cumulative and damaging effect for women's sense of well-being. This is the focus of this last theme where I argue that positioning oneself as shameful is highly disempowering and debilitating. This argument is based on the claim that subject positions are not just theoretical

constructs, but have implications for one's sense of self and self-worth (Burman and Parker 1993).

I believe that the investigation of these real implications is an important factor if discursive analysis aims at political change. The question asked here then, is what effect the positioning of themselves as shameful or inadequate has on women. What transpired from the accounts was an apparent distrust in their own judgment and self-blame. For example, I found that in case of attack women often tended to question their perception of reality, their responsibility and complicity in the event, and finally turned the rage against themselves rather than on the attacker. I illustrate how the self-blame can be constructed as a positive 'taking responsibility for one's actions'. My intention is, at this point, to take to its extreme consequences the implications of positioning oneself as shameful and create some space for alternative subject-positions for women to emerge.

5.3 Conclusions

In this chapter I have addressed some of the methodological issues raised in chapter four. In particular I have given an in depth description of the way I conducted the interviews and the qualitative methods used to analyze them. One of the issues raised in this chapter concerns similarities and differences between a discursive and a psychoanalytic reading of text. The issues related to the research/participant relationship and how they were affected by my clinical experience have also been discussed. I have also stated my research questions and given a general overview of the findings. The following five chapters form the qualitative section of the research, and contain an in-depth analysis and discussion of the five themes.

CHAPTER SIX:

Shame and the Ideal

"We live in an atmosphere of shame. We are ashamed of everything that is real about us; ashamed of ourselves, of our relatives, of our incomes, of our accents, of our opinions, of our experience, just as we are ashamed of our naked skins."

(G.B.Shaw in Wumser 1981:60)

6.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to look at how shame is constructed within the theme of ideals and failing to meet them. I will also look at how a psychoanalytic reading of the accounts might contribute to the view that shame associated with failing to meet an ideal is a personal, intrapsychic issue.

In opposition to this, I claim that the ideals and the associated shame are neither 'out there' or exclusively intrapsychic. Nor are ideals neutral constructs, but are embedded in social ideological discourses. My first step in this investigation will be to provide a relevant framework within psychoanalytic literature which I will subsequently

ground in the experiences reported in the interviews. This will be followed by a discursive analysis and a psychoanalytic reading of the extracts.

6.1 Shame and the Ideal in Psychoanalysis

As early as 1914 Freud made a connection between the reinforcement of the ego's narcissism, the fulfilling of the ideal and the increase in self-regard, clearly stating that the ideal has a social side⁸. The fear of loss of parental love which motivates the child to comply to the parents' wishes, later in life becomes fear of loss of love from society. Freud explained this process by holding that the child introjects societal values and norms and is motivated to comply, from within, by the desire to be the 'ideal child' loved by the parents.

It is only with Sandler's formulation of ideal-self (Sandler 1986) that some space is allowed to the actual negotiation with societal values at present (for a more in-depth exploration of the concept see the Introduction). The concept of the ideal-self is based on Edith Jacobson's (1954) understanding of self-representation which is described as comprising the image and subjective experience of ourselves that we have at any given moment.

In other words the self is constantly in a process of being negotiated and constructed. The concept of ideal-self from this point of view is quite rare in psychoanalysis, as

⁸ "In addition to its individual side, the Ideal has a social side; it is also the common Ideal of a family, a class or a nation. [...] Originally this sense of guilt was a fear of punishment by the parents, or, more correctly, the fear of losing their love; later the parents are replaced by an indefinite number of fellow-men." (Freud 1914)

it considers the outside ideals in their present influence, not just as internalizations of norms⁹.

The concept of the ideal-self is used to represent one of the shapes of the self-representation and is the desired shape of the self, i.e. the 'self-I-want-to-be'. This is the shape, at a particular moment, which would yield the greatest degree of well-being; in this way the attainment of the ideal-self motivates human beings (Sandler 1986). If the individual cannot change in order to identify with their ideal-self there is the affective state of lowered self-esteem and shame (Pines 1995, Sandler 1963, Wumser 1981)

In line with this view, Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985) holds that the pressure of sibling and peer group are much more significant in pressurising the individual to meet the ideal. Because of this pressure, the need to meet ideals can also become incapacitating as she considers the loss of society love to be at the level of a narcissistic injury (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1985). This view is consistent with Piers and Singer (1953) who stress the necessity of 'checking out' our ideals in the real world. It is this necessity of having our sense of value reflected back to us and approved of by people around us that makes the fulfilment of an ideal so crucial in terms of self-esteem.

The above references to literature seem to suggest some recognition of the inter-subjective nature of the ideal-self. However, because psychoanalytic intervention aims at intrapsychic change (Sandler and Sandler 1993), the inter-subjective nature of the

⁹ "At any one time we have a whole system of Ideal-Selves that are derived from different sources. One may be closely related to the aims of an unconscious instinctual wish, another may be linked to Super-Ego standards, others with the Ideals of the real parents or of the group of which we are a part, and so on." (Sandler 1986:124)

conflict can be neglected. The ideal is recognised as having importance because of its *function* of motivator, but its *content* is considered irrelevant and is presented as neutral. In contrast with this view I want to argue that it is crucial to scrutinize how the ideal is constructed and presented.

Firstly, ideals are heavily charged with meaning. Second being able to fit in with society's ideals grants people a sense of being 'right' and acceptable and increases their self-esteem and well-being. Ideals are historical constructs whose legitimation rests on ideological practices which mask them as natural, neutral and 'common-sense'.

6.2 Grounding theory in experience

This chapter explores the connection between the ideals that the women interviewed measure themselves against and shame in the participants accounts. Following Brown and *et al.* (1990a,b), the implicit existence of these ideals were identified by sentences prefaced with phrases like "I wish I were more/less...", "I would like to...", "I should...". whereby the women positioned themselves as being other than or less than a desired standard. The majority of comments were very general and varied from person to person. For example Mae talked of personal characteristics: [*I am not clever enough, I am not pretty enough, I am not intelligent enough, I am not attractive enough*], while Dawn focused on social situations and performance in public: [*a situation where you don't react in the way you are supposed to (...) being ashamed of not knowing what kind of things to say*].

Sandy was very specific about the kind of person she would like to be: [*I would like to be one of those capable people who seem to effortlessly manage to be pleasant and*

not too much and not too overconfident and irritating because they are so full of themselves (.) calm, collected and likeable], while Tania was much more general: [*I was reacting by trying to be ideal for my parents*].

All the above texts construct a self that is lacking in relation to desired qualities around which the 'ideal- selves' are constructed. The women interviewed positioned themselves as being 'other than that'; implying that it is possible to be or become those ideal Selves, even if it is possible only for other women, as was implied by Sandy.

What is striking about these ideals is that, apart from the account from Tania where the ideal is placed in the context of her parents' desire, all the other ideals are represented as self-referential. No explanation is offered on why they are desired or what being that particular kind of person would accomplish. The ideals are represented in isolation, as if standing on their own. The ideal cannot be questioned as it is presented as an absolute. For example Mae does not say that she is less pretty than x, but that she is not pretty *enough*.

What is under scrutiny is the individual failure to meet the ideal; in this instance to be 'pretty enough'. It is around this failure that the shameful self is constructed. This is seen immediately in the fact that positioning of themselves in comparison to these ideals has implications for the women's sense of self. In these extracts the women take subject positions built around negative self-evaluation constructed in comparison with qualities or ways of being which are represented as existing independently of the subject and as distinct possibilities.

The emotions expressed when talking about their failures are of inadequacy [Dawn: *I felt inadequate in the sense that I had not been able to behave as I was expected*]

and strong feelings of disliking oneself [Sandy: *I think that people will see a very immature person, somebody who just gets it wrong, does everything wrong socially*].

More specifically, I want to focus on the fact that the shameful self is constructed around the comparison with the ideal, as is clearly stated by Moira:

"It is like a struggle between what you would like to be and what you really are(.) shame comes into that when you realize that you are not actually the person you would like to be and you have to confront your own weaknesses and bad points(.)"

This account constructs the ideal as the context which makes the self shameful. Moira is presenting the dynamic as a fact and the feeling of shame as a result of her insight into this fact. The two selves, the self she would like to be and the self she really is, are presented as things, separate and, in this case, different. This allows Moira to position her shame as a positive, mature acknowledgment of 'reality'. This acknowledgment, it is suggested, takes place within Moira and is her own private affair.

Other women offered a different version of their shameful feelings and introduced the effect of media and 'society'. For instance Judy, talking about what contributed to her feelings of shame concerning her body said:

"[...] I never felt that I could actually meet those expectations, I mean they are self-imposed in a sense but you know coming through things like pictures, cause I was not aware of how the media informs those feelings at the time but I was certainly aware of pictures on telly and adverts and dolls [...]"

The language she uses in describing expectations as 'coming through things like pictures' suggests the idea of herself as passive recipient of messages which manage to get inside of her and then become self-imposed. These messages come from agencies which, in the account, are presented as being 'out there'. Therefore shame

is presented as the result of social conditioning. The supposition "you know" implies a shared knowledge between her and I, further warranting our joint position as victims of social conditioning.

On similar lines Sonia, while talking about why sexual freedom in women can be seen as shameful, gave this explanation:

"They (people) would think that I am cheap, there is no doubt about that, it's like 'If she does that...'/ all the whole attribution series goes into motion, they apply as throughout a series of events/ basically it's society that makes us feel shameful/ [...] We live in a very bigoted society [...]"

Here the social conditioning is more openly stated, and with it is the passive position of being shameful. This is further qualified as being the judgement of a bigoted society. The distancing from that society is stated by the opposition to what they, the other people, the bigoted society out there would think, with the implication that she would think otherwise. Her possible feelings of shame are thus constructed as an imposition.

The two above accounts rest on a dualistic discourse which separates individual and society, victims and perpetrators. The power to impose ideals and to shame is located 'out there' in society and the individual woman is the victim of it. Foucault strongly dismissed this dualistic representation of how power is exercised as insufficient (Foucault 1980). In particular it is inadequate in untangling the complexities in which power finds expression. A Foucaultian approach can be useful to feminism, as it enables going beyond the belief in a purely 'innocent' class of the purely 'oppressed' (Bailey 1993:111) and replaces it with a new understanding of one's identity and its possibilities (ibid:117). Furthermore I would argue that locating power in an external

force makes invisible the spontaneous and solitary resistances of women in everyday life¹⁰.

I will try to capture the complexities of oppression, shame and resistance, still in the theme of ideals through the following extract from an interview with Moira. I want to argue that when looking at the experience of shame she describes, we are looking at a struggle for a different 'meaning' to be attributed to her action and for a different discourse within which she would not be positioned as shameful.

I will first give a psychoanalytic reading of the account. In it I will use two concepts: one is the understanding of shame as a reaction-formation and the other is the concept of the ideal-self, which I have already described in the previous pages (see also chapter four for a discussion of the concept). Although both psychoanalytic, these two views on shame show how shame acquires quite a different meaning according to the view on human nature and motivation underlying the two formulations. It could be argued that they function as different discourses on the human mind.

¹⁰ Foucault asserts that "there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations." (Foucault 1978:96 as cited in Bailey 1993:116)

6.3 Moira's account

- M: I was on the beach, last summer and we were sunbathing in France, we had been to a nudist beach the previous day and although this was not a nudist beach people were topless, and I took my top off and someone was completely naked and I thought "what the hell" and I got completely naked on the beach and I was placidly lying down and there was this guy who was selling drinks and my husband stopped to buy a drink and they began to have a chat and I felt extremely exposed. The conversation went on because my husband was very interested in what he had to say and I suddenly became totally self-conscious and I had been very brave (.) obviously you feel that you have to go along with it, once you have your aims set you become kind of militant about it, but in fact I was feeling quite self-conscious about (it), and it is a fear, because in a way to put clothes on was admitting that I was feeling shame so (.)
- B: This is very interesting because it sounds like there are two themes (.) one was the fact that your naked body was exposed, but there was also something else and that was (.) you felt you had to be in a certain way and to put your clothes on would have showed that you were not in that way
- M: yes, yes [B] is that right?
- M: yes, I suppose I was feeling very bad about it but I had to struggle in my mind thinking "so what the hell, what is wrong with it", but I was feeling uncomfortable, I was not enjoying being naked, I had enjoyed it before, it became a kind of a self punishment, I did not want to show that that was it, that I was feeling embarrassed about my own nakedness, so I had to struggle between the image I wanted to project and my own self-image, a tricky one, but it was funny how this bloke was like a mirror in front of me and while before I could not see myself I began to see myself/[...] yes, it is like a struggle between what you would like to be and what you really are; you would like to be all free of inhibition and censorship and in fact you are not, realizing all that (..)

6.3.1 The Psychoanalytic Reading

If we approach the account looking for the causes of shame, two can be identified: Moira's exhibitionistic drive and her becoming aware of a discrepancy between her 'actual self' and her 'ideal-self'. The former belongs to the classic psychoanalytic frame of reference which regards shame as a reaction formation. There is Moira's desire to expose her body and the pleasurable feelings associated with it [*"I was placidly laying down; "I had enjoyed it before (being naked)"*]. This is followed however by being seen, which provokes feelings of self-consciousness. The feeling of exposure becomes negative and painful: she experiences it as uncomfortable, a kind of self punishment and finally there is embarrassment.

The concept of shame as caused by falling short of an ideal can be identified when she talks of the struggle between the *"image I wanted to project and my own self-image"* and clearly spelt out when she says *"it is a struggle between what you would like to be and what you really are; you would like to be all free of inhibitions and censorship and in fact you are not, realizing all that.."*

The first problem with this type of analysis is that it ends up isolating aspects of the experience of shame, somehow separating them from the context which ultimately gives them meaning. This type of analysis seems to rest on some underlying assumptions which are worth paying attention to: Firstly, that the various elements considered are facets of the 'phenomenon of shame' which is 'out there', and can be observed and measured. Language is taken to reflect a number of these facets or factors at a given time. Secondly, a Newtonian model of cause and effect still permeates the analysis of the cause of shame. Thirdly, by using a psychoanalytic model, shame automatically becomes an exclusively 'intrapsychic' phenomenon.

6.3.2 A Discursive Analysis

Moving onto a more discursive level of analysis of the text implies leaving most of these assumptions behind. It requires moving away from the assumption that language is neutrally describing the phenomenon of shame and looking moreover at how language is used and for what purposes. Furthermore, what are the contexts which give meaning to shame and what are the implications of using those contexts of meaning?

The apparent content of this shame experience is related to nakedness. At the beginning of her account, Moira tells me about having been to a nudist beach the previous day. This information has the function of contextualising and perhaps justifying her subsequent actions. This attempt at legitimation carries on in the next line with the information that "*..although that was not a nudist beach [..] someone was completely naked*".

Following on from the above psychoanalytic reading, if language neutrally represents Moira's shame, then shame is an intrapsychic conflict and is exclusively her own business. But if Moira is drawing on existing socially constructed discourses, her shame expresses some of the dilemmas connected to the contradictory demands made on women at this point in history.

The psychoanalytic framework is still useful. It would seem that the two psychoanalytic explanations or contexts coexist and run parallel to each other in the account. However, what I am interested in is what happens when they clash. Moira introduces the contradiction with two opposite representations of the same action. She talks of feelings of self-consciousness and shame on the one hand and pride for having been brave on the other: "*I suddenly became totally self-conscious and I had been very brave*" (10,11).

Moirira here is adopting two subject-positions. I suggest two interpretations of her words. From within the context of Moira wanting to be in control of her body, having dared to be naked is signifier of courage, emancipation, open-mindedness, sexual liberation. At the same time and within the same context, putting her clothes back on would mean defeat and shame. However, from within the context of acceptable social behaviour the same action of being naked is a signifier of shame.

I would argue that it depends on which 'self' Moira identifies with that determines her action as shameful or as a source of pride. It would appear, however, that there is some uncertainty about which of these is the shameful self and that neither can be sustained for long.

Moirira appears to take up both subject positions at the same time. She offers the story as a dilemma between the two contexts but also as a double bind between, a) two ideals which are mutually exclusive and b) the contradiction between what Moira ideally wants to do and the way this makes her feel uncomfortable and becomes a self-punishment. The dilemma and the feelings of shame are not 'caused' by Moira, but by the nature of her self as a contradictory, fragmented and constructed thing.

It is constructed in at least two senses: firstly, through contexts which reflect contradictory demands made on women on a large scale i.e. the apparently 'acceptable' uses of female nudity in fashion, advertising and the media in general¹¹ and the coexistence of both 'traditional' and 'modern' stereotypes for women.

¹¹ "The paradox that women's breasts glare out from almost every tabloid newspaper and are used to sell all manner of consumer durables, yet a woman who bares her own breasts in public could be arrested for indecent exposure, points to the anomaly that men have more access to and control over women's bodies than women themselves" (Ussher 1989:22).

Secondly, the self is always negotiated and constructed primarily in the interaction with the 'other'. There are at least three possible 'others' in this extract, each having a different 'effect' on the process of attribution of meaning. There is the 'other' of the nudist beach visited the previous day, the 'other' in the shape of the man selling drinks, and there is me, with my multiple self of woman, researcher, feminist, psychologist.

In other words, the self is fragmented and contradictory because it is being constructed in the here and now of the interaction. This is why it is crucial to look at my role and that of the 'others' and the negotiation of the two above positions within the interview setting.

The justification of why Moira was sunbathing naked could be seen as an attempt to make me judge her positively. This strategy highlights the power imbalance between her and I in the interview setting. Moira begins by saying that she did not feel shame on the nudist beach the previous day. The nudist beach had provided her with a context within which her nakedness was not a signifier of shame. We could postulate that this was because everyone else was naked and she was not different; i.e. the 'social norm' was different, or perhaps because nakedness did not carry any sexual connotation. What matters is that by referring to the nudist beach, Moira introduces the possibility of a context within which it is possible to attribute a different meaning to her action.

This is what I think she is attempting to do again with me. It is in this context that I read the sudden shift to the use of 'you' as an impersonal pronoun [*"Obviously you feel that you have to go along with it and once you have set your aims you become . . . "* (11,12)] as a way of drawing me into the assumed shared position as 'liberated' women. The fact that the sentence is ended with a statement of the dilemma and

somehow left suspended can be seen either as an invitation to me to express my opinion or perhaps a way of eliciting direction.

My response is apparently non-committal and seems to paraphrase what Moira had said. On the other hand what I say confirms the existence of her conflict. Perhaps the use of paraphrasing, a well-known counselling skill, is what prompted her to talk more in depth about her feelings. If this is the case, she was responding to my psychoanalytic self.

The third 'other' mentioned in the extract is the man selling drinks. His function as a mirror is particularly interesting. In the extract he is used as the other who, in the experience of shame, breaks the silent, unconscious continuity of existence and makes the self painfully visible and aware of itself. However, in order for this process to produce shame, the image of the self as shameful has to be accepted as a true representation and be identified with.

The role of the man, then, could be taken to represent a patriarchal common-sense discourse on the female body. The examination of this is far beyond the scope of this chapter, however, the way in which this man is positioned by Moira is as a reminder of the way she will be seen by 'society'. The way in which this symbolic mirror positions Moira becomes, at least partially, the way she sees herself. Therefore her female, naked body becomes a signifier of shame. Moira concludes the extract by saying: "ahm, I suppose I could say I felt shame, I felt ashamed of my naked body and therefore of myself."

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the construction of shame through falling short of an ideal, using both a psychoanalytic and discourse analytic approach. The next chapter takes up this last statement of Moira's as the starting point for an investigation of the theme of shame and femininity, in particular the complex transaction through which a shameful body becomes a shameful self.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Femininity and Shame

"According to Goffman [...] the 'beauty system' is naturalised by the ideology of sexual differences and is made to feel essential to femininity. [...] But what this ideology implies is that, like a stigma, the unadorned and unimproved female body is a source of shame and negative feelings." (Tseelon 1995:90)

7.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore some constructions of femininity used by the participants to explain and justify their representations of themselves and other women as shameful. I will argue that this way of accounting functions as a practical ideology (Gill 1993) and contributes to the reproduction of female stereotypes. The underlying intention in this chapter is to move beyond 'femininity' as simply an effect of patriarchal oppression and to look at how women are active in the process of reproducing stereotypes (Smith 1990). To approach the issues through women's accounts has the benefit of examining 'femininity' as actual practices, actual activities, taking place in real time and real places (Smith 1990:38).

The general theme of 'femininity' will be examined by looking at shame in relation to the two themes of the feminine body and female sexuality. This is because the majority of women talked extensively or made some reference to one or both of these themes. I will start by looking at each first from a psychoanalytic frame of reference,

then link it to broader sociological issues and their feminist critiques. Finally I will discursively analyse some extracts from the interviews and propose a post-structuralist critique of some of the issues raised by the analysis of the extracts.

One important clarification to be made here, is that all the women interviewed spoke of their sexuality and their bodies within the context of heterosexuality. The discussion of the implications of heterosexuality as the implicit norm is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that in this chapter the female body and sexuality are looked at exclusively within that context.

7.1 BODY AND BEAUTY

7.1.1 Back to Freud

For Freud, women's shame is firmly rooted in the female body's inherent deficiency (1897, 1933). Chapter three summarised Freud's phallocentric representation of femininity and some of its feminist critiques; in that chapter Freud's representation of women has been taken to represent the construction of femininity in a patriarchal society. Freud defined shame as the female feeling *par excellence*, and attributed it to the lack of a penis. This lack, according to Freud, makes women more narcissistic and vain in an attempt to compensate for their deficiency. Thus, the centrality of the body in women's shame is granted not only by its deficient state, but also by the extra attention women lavish it with in order to compensate for its lack of a penis.

It is from this centrality of the body that this chapter begins, attempting an investigation which wants to go further than a portrayal of women as passive victims of patriarchy. It has been argued that the internalisation of a patriarchally constructed

image of the female body might affect women's sense of value and identity (Ussher 1989, Wolf 1990, Faludi 1991). In an attempt to utilize Freudian theory, feminist writers have suggested a symbolic reading of the phallus as representing women as second class and inferior (see chapter three for a review of the literature)

Luce Irigaray (1974, 1985) is particularly enlightening in understanding the impact of patriarchal discourses whose phallogentric biases are taken for universal truth (Whitford, 1992), despite the criticisms of her having used another form of essentialism in the shape of an alternative feminine discourse modeled the on female genitals, in order to rescue women from the repressive effects of phallogentrism (see Berg 1991)¹²

Irigaray argues, for instance, that the women constructed within a psychoanalytic discourse are positioned as 'lacking', deprived of a value per se. Woman is defined as the other sex in terms of its relation to men: as mother, virgin or whore, for example, but not in relation to themselves (Whitford 1992).

In the interviews, when talking about their relationship with their bodies, the women communicated a powerful awareness of their physicality. This was often communicated with a desire 'to be beautiful' (eg Sandy: I would like them to think that I am attractive) and in most cases paralleled a dissatisfaction with their actual appearance. For example:

Tania: I had a big split between my expectations for myself and what I was in terms of emotionally and intelligently, suddenly I had this body and I would throw it away/

There is a vast body of literature which has expressed doubts and often severe criticisms of various parts of Irigaray's theory (see for instance Plaza 1982, Silverman 1988)

Judy: My sense of feeling ashamed of my body and not feeling comfortable with it, which is not as acute as it was, but still not being able to be the way that I am (.) maybe it has got to do with expectation, maybe with cardboard cut-out/

The women expressed very strong negative feelings coupled with a sense of being uncomfortable and feeling painfully visible. These feelings were particularly acute concerning body size and shape.

7.1.2 Feminism and the Female Body.

Feminist writers have always paid a great deal of attention to the representations, fantasies and exploitations of the female body (De Beauvoir 1949, Millett 1972). A lot has been written recently on the objectification of women's physical appearance as a challenge to capitalistic/patriarchal oppression (Williamson 1978, Coward 1984, Wolf 1990, Faludi 1992, Stanley and Wise 1993). In particular some feminist writers have highlighted some fundamental contradictions which confront modern women. For instance, it has been noted that while the extensive use of female bodies in advertising might seem to suggest an intrinsic link between the female body and beauty, the derogatory light under which the female body is constructed carries the potential for women's debilitation and negative self-image (Ussher 1989).

Particular attention has also been paid to the 'ideal of beauty' and the investment in it. For instance, it has been recognized that while commonly accepted practices of heterosexual femininity take for granted that there is status and power in being attractive to men (Hollway 1984), adhering to current ideals of attractiveness might turn out to be an impossible task. Wetherell and White (1992) for example, have pointed out how often the 'ideal woman' is portrayed as being a size eight, which for most healthy, adult women would be unrealistic to attain. (This is apart from the

continually reinforced ideal of being white, heterosexual and able-bodied, which for large sections of the population are either impossible or irrelevant).

However even in these most striking cases, women often do not regard the ideal as impossible, or even unreasonable, but rather experience themselves as failing and are ashamed of their bodies (Wetherell and White 1992). In this way, an unnatural, constructed value is presented as natural and normal and gains legitimacy.

S.Orbach (1986) takes this situation to its extreme consequences and suggests a link between these contradictory demands and anorexia. She argues that :

"Anorexia nervosa - self-starvation - is [...] a metaphor of our age [...] a dramatic expression of the internal compromise wrought by Western women in the 1980s in their attempt to negotiate their passions and desires in a time of extraordinary confusion. [...] what occurs in anorexia nervosa is the excruciating spectacle of women actually *transforming* their bodies in their attempts to deal with the contradictory requirements of their role in late twentieth-century America and England." (Orbach 1993:4)

This is, I think, exemplified in the following extract from the interview with Sonia, which I will now analyse, suggesting a reading of it related to Irigaray's concept of the body as 'wrapping'. Irigaray (1974, 1985) argued that women's power under patriarchy is dependent upon their function as a means of exchange, whereby their worth resides in the conformity of their bodies to patriarchal standards of beauty. If in a male-dominated 'market', the phallus is the only 'currency', femininity is caught in the vicious circle of having to learn to act 'as if she had it'.¹³

¹³ The implications of this phenomenon in terms of sense of identity will be further explored in the chapter on the 'façade'.

The body, argues Irigaray, becomes women's façade of value; the physical vanity of women and the 'fetishization' of her body mandatory if she is to be a desirable 'object'. She will seek to secure an increase in her price by using disguises and masks in the form of cosmetics, through which women intend to deceive; to promise more value than can be delivered (Irigaray 1974).

However, the resulting sense of value is short-lived and always at the mercy of a deprecating look. Shame will be the remainder of the compromise and the disavowal at work in the fetish.¹⁴ It is in this light that I wish to look at the following extract.

7.1.3 Sonia's Account.

- 1 S: I don't think I have got any problems with my self image physically, I am
2 quite happy with that: I am not a beast or skinny so I think that is OK/ [...]
3 I would like to turn the clock back and turn younger/
4 B: I have just realized I did not ask you how old you are/
5 S: Is that really necessary?
6 B: Well, if you don't want to/
7 S: 47 (laughs) and this is a source of amusement because no one knows my age
8 and I never tell anybody, not that I am ashamed of it, I am quite proud of it
9 in a way because I have done a lot of things, I have achieved a lot very early
10 because I also studied abroad and I studied arts and I think one's vitality and
11 contentment shows on one's face and that's why I say I am quite happy with
12 myself physically because I still think I have a physique of almost like a
13 teenager, so I if I took my clothes off and look at this body it does not look
14 like a 47 years old body simply because I am not a great drinker, I don't

¹⁴ "Therefore woman weaves in order to veil herself, masks the faults of Nature, and restore her in her wholeness. By *wrapping her up*. In a wrapping that Marx has told us preserves the "value" from a just evaluation. And allow the "exchange" of goods "without knowledge" of their effective value." (Irigaray 1974:115)

15 smoke, I swim and I am aware of my body, things that are going on, I go to
16 the osteopath every week/

7.1.4 A Discursive Analysis.

The extract opens with a positive remark and the participant positions herself as happy and not having a problem with self-image. However, what immediately transpires from this extract is that in spite of this, the positive attribution to her physical appearance is made in negative terms: "I am not a beast or skinny so I think that is OK." This is presented as not having problems with self-image, implying that those are the limits of positive experience of one's body.

Soon after that, Sonia tells me that age is an issue, and stresses that further by an outburst of laughter, which I would interpret as containing a mixture of embarrassment and pride. She is very keen to specify that her age is a source of amusement, then she reassures me that it is certainly not source of shame, underscoring this by adding that it is in fact source of pride.

My first reaction would be to take the statement "not that I am ashamed of it" as a 'disclaimer' (see Wetherell and Potter 1992). This however, would have some important consequences: firstly, it would mean forcing a choice on Sonia as to whether she feels proud or ashamed of her body. Secondly, it would grant me the privileged position of somehow knowing what she really feels. Thirdly, I would be looking at Sonia's body as a thing, rather than as a multifaceted construction. I would then lose sight of the coexistence of two representations of body: one, the 'teenage body' is represented as a source of pride, while the forty-seven years old body is presented shamefully, hidden and denied. What is crucial in the understanding of

Sonia's choice of identifying with the 'teenage body' is that only that position spares her from shame. She colludes with the arbitrary value given to looking young and slim, thereby evading the devaluation implicit in her actual age.

Sonia constructs a further split, already identified in other accounts, between mind and body. In this extract her intellectual achievements, which, she tells us, show as vitality and contentment on her face, are somehow quite separate from her carefully looked-after physique.

The implications of the use of an unrealistic ideal for women has been discussed in the previous chapter. What I am interested in here is the mystification of the rhetoric of 'choice' and 'self-determination' and their key role in commercial representations of diet and exercise. There are two points here that need to be clearly spelled out as they are relevant to the extract above.

The first is the rhetoric of care which makes it difficult to distinguish between genuine self-care, from a practice of self-normalisation to current standards of femininity (visits to the osteopath, exercise, not smoking). The second, connected to this, and carrying serious consequences for women's relationship to their bodies, is that the original body (i.e. the mean before the normalisation), becomes a "defect which has been corrected" (Bordo 1993:179) and this is because it is compared to the normalised\unreal body.

The extract from Sonia therefore offers a graphic representation of how individually she struggles to survive the shame of a 'real body' in the absence of more realistic ideals and alternative discourses of the female body. However, I have also pointed out my difficulty in completely identifying her strategy as straightforward resistance.

Bordo (1993) has warned against the pseudo-feminist messages of the mass-media which present women's 'normalisation' (the re-shaping of one's body to fulfil current ideals of beauty), under the light of self-empowerment and 'taking one's life into one's hands' (Bordo 1993:196). She gives the poignant example of the singer Cher, who by successive operations of cosmetic surgery, re-shaped her body into a more conventional, ever-youthful version of female beauty. However, this unrealistic and unreal body, argues Bordo, tragically becomes a standard against which other women will measure, judge, discipline and 'correct' themselves (Bordo 1993:197).

Similar issues are negotiated in the next extract, which highlights the fragmented, multifaceted construction of the female body, shame and the self.

7.1.5 Judy's Account.

[...] I think I was always very self-conscious because I thought I was fat, and clothes never felt right to me and I always felt that people were sort of looking at me and think that I was fat and I was never particularly fat, I was sort of (.) I had puppy fat (.) I was never noticeably fat but I used to think that people were pointing at me saying "Gosh, she is fat, look at her, she is podgy, ugly/

Judy's account moves between many different levels, demonstrating how the construction of the shameful female body, far from being a one-directional, straightforward process, involves constant negotiations and contradictions.

The first line already contains two levels of polarities: past-present and subject-object. The past-present opposition is there from the onset ["I think (present) I was (past) always very self-conscious because I thought (past) I was fat" (past)]. By starting her speech by reference to a present reflection immediately Judy sheds a light of uncertainty about what happened: it is not clear whether, a) in the past she was fat

or not; b) whether something else happened in the past but on reflection, this is what she has now decided happened; or c) whether or not it was her body size that made her self-conscious or something else altogether.

One of the effects of this initial line is to set the scene: we might expect, as we are talking about bodies, reference to concrete facts. Instead the speech conveys confusion, uncertainty, vagueness. The body constructed is not a solid, easily definable entity, but obviously constantly negotiated. The other effect of this opening is to ground the following statement in the present context of the interview.

The important polarity between thinking and being, mind and body, is also stated in the first line. This strategy requires the listener to suspend the belief in one's body by pointing at the possible difference between a body as it is 'thought about' and as it is 'lived'.

Up to now there is no conflict between subject and object: we are invited to assume that the Judy who was self-conscious, the Judy who thought she was fat and the Judy who was fat were the same agent. This is totally contradicted, however, in the next few lines where we are told she felt that other people thought that she was fat, whereas actually she was not. This contradiction and the increased uncertainty is made more evident by the presence of 'never particularly' and 'never noticeably'.

The use of words like 'never', 'always', 'everybody' are often employed to make the statement more persuasive functioning as 'extreme case formulations' (Pomerantz 1986). So we are further invited to believe that it was other people who thought she was fat, although in fact she never was. And yet in both cases 'never' is immediately followed by a word which mitigates or even nullifies the impact of the statement. At

first she says that she was "never particularly fat" thus juxtaposing a very powerful word which cannot be disputed with a relative, imprecise term.

To come out of this impasse Judy resorts to another split of child/adult and states that she had 'puppy fat'. In this way she introduces a further differentiation which allows her to be fat and not fat at the same time, i.e. she evokes a context in which her fatness would be acceptable. This is furthered by saying that she was never "noticeably fat", i.e. that she was fat but it wasn't noticeable. This in turn introduces the final polarity between subject and object to explain how, despite the fact that she did not think she was fat and that she indeed was not particularly fat, people still noticed it and pointed at her. The quote ends with the poignant equation of being fat with being ugly.

I read this dense and tortuous statement in many ways. Firstly I think it illustrates the complexity of the negotiations surrounding the female body and some of the polarities between which that negotiation takes place. Secondly, it shows Judy's struggle to resist negative definitions of her body. Thirdly, it shows how the self is constantly negotiated in a to and fro movement between subject, audience and internalisation of the judgement. This also demonstrates the intersubjective nature of language. Finally if we take the first and last lines of this extract, the pain is firmly placed with Judy: she is shameful and ugly.

I want to pursue this further in the continuation of the interview which contains some explanation of how she arrived at this position in regard to her body.

Judy:

One of the things I remember is being very ashamed of my body and not going swimming for long long time, then I bought this bikini, I was 12, 13, I had breasts and this bikini really showed them off/ and I remember that I felt that all the men were staring at me, maybe they weren't, but I was

mortified, I wanted to chop my head off my body and be sort of disassociated with this/ and I was aware of men and boys looking at me but I was not sure whether they were looking at me in adoration or critically, or laughing at me/ I just had this terrible feeling of being on show and being on exhibit/ I was not just a girl going for a swim, I was a girl in a bikini with big breasts/ [...] On exhibit, like an object, a sexual sort of object, kind of a (.) someone who represents something, [...] it felt a bit wrong because I was being looked at like an adult but I still felt like a child and therefore I felt like I was being looked at in that sense, like I was on show, parading in front of people/

In the previous extract Judy's body was constructed as uncertain, contradictory and changeable in terms of what it was, although definitely shameful. The construction of shameful body is due to Judy feeling shame as self-consciousness because she thought she was fat and because she felt that other people thought she was fat. We are left not knowing what her body was in reality. In the second extract, however, the body eventually becomes physical, even though split between head and breasts. This account constructs the female body as object: a sexual object and the object of the male gaze, built on the reflected image received from other people.

This representation is in the experience of being on exhibit and of being disassociated from one's body. This disassociation is considered as the effect of the gaze which positions the woman not as a person but as an agglomerate of sexual part-objects ("I was not just a girl going for a swim I was a girl in a bikini with big breasts").

This act of power and control is graphically expressed by Foucault:

"There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. *Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze*, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point the he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself" (Foucault 1977:155, my italics).

The disassociation is also defined as a defensive measure, by turning the rage against oneself ("I was mortified, I wanted to chop my head off my body and be sort of disassociated with this"). It has been noted by feminist researchers (Swann 1995, Malson 1995), that a dualistic mind-body discourse is often employed to make sense of women's relationship to anorexia and PMT. This extract implies that a disassociation of the mind from the body is considered a necessary measure to retain a minimal sense of self. Disassociation is therefore presented as a way of preserving some sense of ownership of one's self, by allowing the split-off, shameful body to be owned by the gaze, while the 'woman' hides.

This disassociation perhaps explains some of the confusion between what Judy thought and what she was, expressed in the previous extract as if she had metaphorically separated her mind from her body.

There is also a continuation of the split between adult and child. A resolution to this split is offered by the representation of herself as a girl (child) with big breasts (adult). And yet this extract still contains resistance to this image which Judy insists is forced on her from outside. The resistance to being 'an object, a sexual sort of object' can be found in her feelings that there was something wrong, again a split, between her feelings of being a child while being looked at as an adult.

7.2 SEXUALITY

"It is during adolescence that the young woman first experiences a split between her body and her self: between her own experience and the archetype she is expected to emulate." (Ussher, 1989:14)

One of the functions of the child\adult split as communicated in the interviews, is that positioning oneself as a child might offer some safety from being a sexual object. This is supported by the way women talked about puberty which irrevocably marks the change into womanhood. Often the participants identified puberty as the moment in which, as women, they became shameful. For instance:

Jessica:

I think for women the body is also about shame, shame of looking like a woman. [...] I think the body becomes some sort of vehicle for dealing with sexuality, dealing with shame [...] I have talked with many women about what it is about going into puberty, and the feelings about the changes between themselves and brothers and the father/

Here the body, sexuality and shame are all placed under the same umbrella, almost to the point of implying that shame and sexuality are the same. This is explained later where, when commenting on a shameful incident she has just told me about, she remembers:

Jessica:

um (.) like I had been slapped in the face/ interesting that slapping the face makes me think of my mother telling me of when she started her periods and she hid it and then she told her mother and her mother slapped her/ that's what they do, they slap the girls around their faces when they start their periods, because that was the end of innocence as it were, and she remembered feeling that she was bad and I think that these things are carried from mother to daughter/

Several times women expressed the shame and negative connotations attached to women who are represented as actively sexual: Doreen: "a shameful woman would be a 'femme fatale'"; Paula: "sex before marriage [...] was a man's gain and woman's shame"; Sonia (referring to a woman going to a bar by herself): "What this woman comes here by herself for (giggles) is she looking around for something?"; Jessica: "I think I felt very ashamed because I wanted to be very sexy" and later she adds, "How can we be as women? There is a line between what is seen as being a tart and being ... so if you are in your body and you move and you like eye contact with people you are also seen as a tart, so how do women become unashamed and feel that it is alright to be the way they are?"

The above quote summarises the main conflict in women's heterosexuality; the difficulty in finding a satisfactory position between the need to be in control of one's sexuality and at the same time the fear of being judged a 'tart'. It has been pointed out how women are torn in the 'madonna/whore' dichotomy as a result of which women cannot find a positive model for identification.

"Individual women are inevitably positioned at either end of the dichotomy: good/bad, madonna/whore, feminine/career-oriented [...] This welter of images forms a large part of the contradictory discourses which both define and prescribe behaviour. [...] This inevitably leads to consternation and splitting in the individual woman..." (Ussher 1989:15).

It could be argued that in fact women take on all of these positions and that shame is one of the ways of negotiating the contradictions. This has been suggested by Wumser (1981), for example, who claims that shame can be caused by a 'split' used as a way of dealing with contradictions; the interweaving inner and outer reality.

I have selected the next extract because it touches on many such 'splits' and contradictions around female sexuality as the site of negotiation for women's value and shame. The account graphically illustrates the many contradictory constructions of 'being a woman' and how these contradictions are negotiated through actions of projection and the use of disclaimers. Particular attention is paid to the 'madonna/whore' dichotomy, which many feminist writers have looked at as central in the dilemma of female sexuality as discussed above.¹⁵

Contrary to Judy who immediately took the position of women being shameful, Ambra resists this definition. And yet, in the very accounts she uses to prove that women are not shameful, it is possible to see the re/production of ideological repertoires which construct women as shameful. Ambra makes use of opposition as a rhetorical device to explain how it might be that sometimes women are represented as shameful:

7.2.1 Ambra's Account.

B: What do you think makes shame so powerful?

A: Because in the past women did not have anything else except their virtue, so they had to protect it, while virtue is not an issue for men, men are supposed to sow their wild oats and rubbish like that while [...] morality may even have told them [women] that if they lost their virtue there was nothing left, especially in Indian cultures, the woman was nothing without a man, so that's why they burnt the widows with their husbands in the fires, we still get it, it's illegal now/ but now that women have careers of their own, virtue does not matter that much/

¹⁵ "The other sex is defined in terms of its relation to men: as mother, virgin or whore, for example; but not in relation to itself." (Irigaray in Whitford 1992)

The extract begins with Ambra firmly setting the interview in a framework of cause and effect. The first polarity is based on gender differentiation: Ambra positions women as having their virtue and nothing else, while men "are supposed to sow their wild oats". In other words, a woman's value and pride resides in her capacity to maintain herself as a virgin or by guaranteeing the access to her sexuality exclusively to one man. By contrast, the fact the men are 'expected' to be promiscuous and this becomes a source of pride.

Hollway offers an extremely in-depth and stimulating analysis of gender construction in terms of discourses of promiscuity (see Hollway 1983, 1984, 1989) therefore I will not expand on the subject here. However these issues of virtue, women's worth and shame are important to bear in mind as they are central to Ambra's argument throughout the interview. To exemplify the centrality of virtue to women's value, she gives the tragic example of Indian women who were expected to throw themselves on their husbands' funeral pyre. This implies that their value was only temporarily borrowed from their husbands and when they died, the women lost their function and value in life. Ambra uses this extreme example to support the claim that heterosexual women were nothing without virtue.

However, perhaps aware of the seriousness of her claim, she counteracts it with another dualism: past and present. Everything she has told me about shame, women, virtue and the practise of *sati* belong to the past. This account strikingly ignores the continuing likelihood that a widow in India, unless she belonged to the comparatively small middle class, would face a life of considerable hardship. Perhaps that admission would force Ambra to bring her account to a more realistic level, which seems exactly what she is trying to avoid. This is why, I think, she resorts to abstract notion of propaganda, which does not require her to face the more obvious link to existing economic conditions:

A: Propaganda, especially in India, you are supposed to show how much dependent on your man [you are] and throw yourself on the [fire](.) It's just propaganda, it's the way women are brought up/]

There is a striking contrast between the description of women committing *sati* out of shame and the attribution of it to 'just propaganda', which sounds like an invitation not to take it too seriously. This implication is present later on as well, particularly when talking about rape, almost as if too much was being made of the problem.

I read these as devices which Ambra uses to distance herself from a horrific situation that otherwise, inevitably, she would be part of, both as a woman and being of Indian origins. Perhaps it is also a way of re-addressing the power imbalance not only as a woman in the context of a patriarchal society, but also as an Indian woman in the context of being interviewed by a white woman. The implication of her momentary resolution is that things are alright now - "now that women have careers of their own", which positions both of us back in Europe, as 'career women' capable of ridiculing the power of 'propaganda'.

This takes us to the third dualism, between the virtuous woman and the career woman for whom virtue does not matter that much. Nothing is said however, about whether the 'career woman' is constructed as asexual or as promiscuous and, as it will become clear from the continuation of the extract, the two contradictory constructions cannot be successfully held together for long.

B: And you think it has got to do with Shame?

A: That is imposed on to them because today's woman has no shame like that (.) I don't know because when you have cases of rape that I think even today that destroys women so much, so the shame must still be there even if today a woman can go and live with any man they like, so why would they feel so bad about it?

The attempt at distancing continues with a further temporal split at the beginning of this extract ("that is imposed on to them because today's woman has not shame like that"), where she positions the two of us as 'today's women', implying that those in the past were the shameful women, but not us. Ambra also attempts to excuse them by positioning them as passive recipients of propaganda which is "imposed on them". The temporal dualism cannot be held however, for although today's women do not have shame like that (i.e. that promiscuity is no longer a cause of shame for women), they still are shamed when raped.

The shameful woman, originally constructed around the virginity/promiscuity discourse, is now constructed out of being a rape victim. This sets Ambra in a dilemma, as she obviously feels obliged to clarify what causes shame, but wants to avoid falling into the previous construction of women being shameful when sexually promiscuous: "shame must still be there even today if a woman can go and live with any man they like, so why would they feel so bad about it?"

If a woman can live with (i.e. have sex with) any/as many men she likes, why would she feel bad about being raped unless she still values her virtue? For previous generations, shame was constructed around the value of virtue. To lose her virtue made the woman shameful. Now that that value is no longer so crucial, Ambra asks, why do women still feel shame? Ambra resorts to notions of the body to resolve this dilemma:

A: I think it's about the notion of their body that this man has not respected them and has just imposed themselves and treated her just like a bag and I suppose because she has to face the world having been violated and having been shown up to be a weak human being, I think this is why they feel shame/

Here Ambra constructs shame as being the signifier of weakness and of humiliation, of having to face the world and of being 'shown up'. She is using a construct of shame which implies being seen by the outside world as an inferior or damaged being. What is unclear, however, is what makes the victim of rape a 'weak human being'. Is she referring to physical strength in not having been able to fend off the assault? This is contradicted in the following lines:

- A: [...] I think they respond to the conditioning they had [...] they know how they are supposed to respond/ I think if you were brought up as a woman in a empty island, let's say, and she was raped I think she would feel confused and perplexed, but she would not feel ashamed, if she had had no contact with human beings/ maybe she would just feel the same as if an animal had bitten her leg off or something, so maybe it is all the associations with morality that you have been brought up with when you were a very small child/
[...] if you have brought up this woman as a totally independent human being, then I suppose sex [would be] nothing, just an experience and she would not understand it/ [it] would be the same as any other trauma like having been attacked by an animal or something/ so the fact that women feel violated, it is different from what a woman feels when she has been run over by a bus, so that shows that there is moral shame rather than physical hurt/ the physical hurt is just part of it, but the shame is imposed on her by society/

This extracts clarifies that what she is referring to is 'moral shame'. Ambra resorts in this instance to the notion of upbringing and, as mentioned earlier, morality 'imposed' on women. The strategy employed suggests that the cause of the problem is the special importance attributed to rape, which otherwise, if one were brought up free of sexual propaganda, might be experienced as similar to any other attack on the body. However, in wanting to reduce the importance of rape, Ambra is forced also to reduce the importance of sex which becomes "nothing, just an experience". In this way she falls back into the moral connotations of sexuality.

In order to avoid these moral implications Ambra, like the other women, resorts to a more inventive version of the same mind/body dualism. Wanting to attribute shame

to propaganda, she is left with having to look at rape as just a physical thing (comparable to having one's leg bitten off, being attacked by a wild animal or run over by a bus). In this way the body can be hurt, but there is no shame. Again the shameful self is constructed as women being positioned as passive under the influence of society. But in this way Ambra also hints at the impossibility of understanding morality and sexuality outside of a social context. Her example illustrates very powerfully how even a very concrete event like a rape has no meaning in abstract; in fact, she says, on a deserted island, outside of a social context which attributes meaning to the event, the woman would not be able to understand it. Ambra suggests she would feel confused and perplexed, but not humiliated, implying that shame is completely socially constructed. In spite of this admission, her rhetorical device of distancing herself from the whole issue in fact helps her to evade the crucial step of examining exactly how and why female sexuality should be constructed as shameful.

In respect of sexuality, women in this extract were initially positioned as virtuous if they preserved their virginity and shameful if they did not. In her hypothetical socially neutral environment, they are positioned as either indifferent to sex or, if raped, confused and perplexed but not ashamed. What is avoided is the link between shame and female sexuality. Women feel shame because they respond to conditioning, but what is the logic behind this conditioning? She continues:

- B: So you say that when one is run over by a bus it is a bodily thing, while the other one [rape] has to do with (?)
- A: The emotions and morality/
- B: Also with the way one feels about oneself?
- A: Yes, must do, or what you have been trained to feel about yourself/
- B: So it has to do with expectations/
- A: Oh yes, but then maybe that is the reason why judges don't have such severe penalties for men who rape a prostitute, because their expectation of a prostitute [is] 'so what, what a difference does it make to her?' while if, let's say if it was a young child they would be given huge penalties because the child was unmolested so it is a far greater thing to molest a child like that/

[...] although maybe that is an unfair comparison, because prostitutes are considered so low in society/ let's say a woman who has had lots of lovers say (.) I think if she was raped compared to any woman who never had any lovers then the judge would give less of a penalty to the rapist of the first then to the second, but in that case two women are valued in the same way as being human beings, because a prostitute has got a different status, but the judge would think that the trauma would be less for the one who has lots of lovers than the one who hasn't/

[...] if my friend who had lots of boyfriends, I don't feel they are less worthy than those who never had a boyfriend, so I think in today's society that stigma has changed, thank goodness/

B: But you think/

A: Yes, but judges tend to be old men and they are from a different era/ I think women in the forties might have thought 'Oh I had a lot of lovers and I have been naughty so I am less worthy than a woman who has kept her virtue', but I don't think that women from today would feel this way, because morality has changed/ but judges who belong to yesterday keep the old morality and that is why you got such a hoo-haa in the press with judges saying 'she was asking for it for having a short skirt' because they have not kept up with the modern morality/

The final part of this interview takes us back full circle to the beginning in many ways. First Ambra goes back to the past-present split and thus justifies the inequality of the legal system's judgement of rape as a remnant of the values of a past generation. She cannot however use that strategy as successfully as before. While previously today's 'career women' were portrayed as being spared from the painful consequences of a shaming moral attribution to their sexuality, now no attention is paid to the fact that when these same women are raped, they are still judged unsympathetically by men ("she was asking for it").

What she manages to do is to maintain a distance from the problem due to the split 'I and Them'. This split, which she used before to distance herself from the suicidal Indian women, is now used to distance herself from both the victims of rape and from the old fashioned judges. This is underscored by her insistence: "I don't feel they [promiscuous women] are less worthy than those who had never had a

boyfriend". This allows Ambra not to have to deal with the consequences of what she is saying: the raped women are 'out there' with the shame and the propaganda, distinctly apart from her. They are the ones who, when raped, have to account for their sexual life in order to be taken seriously. Neither does she have to deal with the recurrence of the parallel between virtue and women's worth, because it does not concern her. The shameful women are 'out there' either in the past, or in other countries, or being brainwashed by propaganda, or dealing with old judges. We, from the safety of academic research, united by our 'otherness' (i.e. 'not shameful'), can look at the phenomenon and talk about it.

Ambra takes a very different position from the other interviewees in that she refuses to position herself as shameful and therefore free from the pain of it. But, does her position really allow her to do that? What would happen to Ambra if she were raped, or if she were back in India, or if she was not a 'career woman'? What transpires from this account is that positive representations of active female sexuality are totally absent. Women are represented either as virtuous virgins, as promiscuous-but-shameful, as rape victims or as prostitutes. The question left open is what positions would be available to her (or to many other women), if she could not position herself as 'other'.

For example, it could be argued that in the face of certain representations of women in this account, the difference between rape and intercourse fades away. This justifies the assumption that rape is less traumatic for the woman who has had many lovers and that the punishment of her rapist should be less harsh. This judgement reflects the assumption that the rapist has damaged something whose value was already lessened. This, however suggests that female sexuality is a public affair, that women's active sexual behaviour has serious implications for women's perceived worth.

7.3 Conclusion

I want to suggest that a lack of alternative representations of femininity which do not position women as 'other' to men, and the changing and contradictory image of what a woman is, might contribute to women's difficulties in developing a positive sense of identity. Erosion of self-esteem, confusion about their worth, a sense of wrongness and of a fundamental, pervasive uncertainty about their 'being in the world' being only some of the emotional effects.

At another level, but equally damaging, these positions have highly disempowering implications for women. This will be further explored in chapter ten. Contrary to Ambra, I do not think that shame is 'out there' or that the intersection of female sexuality with shame takes place in a vacuum, but in the everyday lives of women. As such we are all implicated and involved.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Defences Against Shame: Withdrawal and Silence

"Shame, Remorse and Misery are three Furies in whose hands women inevitably have to fall as soon as they cross the boundaries."

(Balzac, 'Gobsek' in Wumser 1981:60)

"I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my house, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use - silence, exile and cunning."

(Joyce 1916, in Gilligan 1992:157)

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will explore the subject position of shameful when functioning as practical ideology (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Gill, 1993); i.e. how versions of facts are constructed in speech, to accomplish social actions (Edwards & Potter, 1992) and to exclude possible competing versions (Madill 1995). In specific I will be looking at the function of women's accounts of avoidance when presented as protective activities to prevent exposure of their shameful self. Hence this chapter will look at accounts of silence, withdrawal and the shameful self.

I will start by providing a psychoanalytic framework to the chapter, then ground some of the theoretical concepts in women's experiences. This will be followed by a possible reading of the accounts from the viewpoint of some feminist literature and finally I will discursively analyse some extracts to investigate how by positioning themselves as shameful, women can both conform to and resist oppression at the same time.

8.1 Psychoanalytic Framework

These are the aspects of the shame phenomenology I consider relevant to this chapter: shame anxiety, shame defences and, more specifically, the intrinsic link between shame, hiding and the façade. The concept of façade and its connection with the self and shame will be explored at a later stage.

The specific form of anxiety called shame anxiety (Wumser 1981, Lewis 1971), is believed to be evoked by the imminent danger of unexpected exposure, humiliation and rejection. Shame anxiety can be seen as a response to the overwhelming trauma of helplessness previously experienced. Alternatively, it may function as a signal, triggered by a milder type of rejection and warning that a more intense one could reach traumatic proportions (Wumser 1981).

Shame is an acutely painful experience about the self, in which the subject feels they 'could die' or 'crawl through a hole' (Lewis 1979). As implied in the root of the word (see Introduction), shame experiences embody a sense of deep exposure (Lynd 1958), of bodily or psychological nakedness (Yorke 1988). Therefore the 'purpose' of shame has been repeatedly connected to hiding and disappearing in order to isolate the person from the danger of exposure (Wumser 1981, M.Lewis 1992). Biblically,

this is graphically expressed by Adam's fall and the attempt to hide, which represented the exposure before God (M.Lewis 1992) and, as discussed in the Introduction, observations of the phenomenological expression of shame (head bowed, avoidance of gaze, shrinking of the body), support the idea that shame engenders a wish for concealment and avoidance.

People use various strategies to shelter themselves from the occurrence of shame, i.e. in psychoanalytic terms, they employ defences. However, relation of defences to shame is of a complex nature as shame can have the function of defence at the same time that other defences are called upon to protect the self from shame (Nathanson 1992). Rage, contempt, envy and depression (among others) can all have the function of defending against shame.

Intrapsychic defences, although sometimes discussed as being employed in aid of resistance (Sandler et al. 1992), are considered protective measures. For instance traditionally, psychoanalytic theory has viewed defences as directed against drive-derived manifestations of intrapsychic conflict (Morrison, 1989). Defence strategies aim at maintaining an intrapsychic homeostatic balance. They are adaptive and psychologically valuable (Kohut, 1984).

8.2 Withdrawal

A number of defensive measures have been attributed specifically to coping with shame, such as turning passive into active; grandiosity and idealization; lying; masochistic flaunting of degradation and externalization by the humiliation of others (Wumser 1981).

However, as I intend to illustrate through the analysis of the interviews, despite the seemingly wide choice of options, it was the silence, the withdrawal, that was repeatedly referred to as the way of dealing with shame. This was described by different women in different ways:

Vanessa:

So I just felt really small and I got really embarrassed, you know when you feel yourself going red and that's it, from that moment I withdrew from the conversation, [...] trying to be invisible(.)

B: People have different ways of reacting to shame situations (.) how do you feel you react?

Molly: Running away, in all sorts of ways, either physically or as a youngster trying to make myself as small as possible, trying to disappear/

Sophie:

[...] the only option seems not to go anywhere and talk to anybody (.)

Rita:

[...] when I realized I just got off and walked off/

All the women mentioned above were describing situations in which they had been either humiliated, or shown as inadequate or helpless. Often the situations involved issues of power. For instance, Vanessa is referring to a board meeting at work in which somebody in a superior position had denigrated a comment of hers. Following this she positioned herself as "having said something really stupid" and withdraws from the conversation. This could be read as 'ranking behaviour' (Gilbert 1994), whereby Vanessa is avoiding confrontation in a situation in which she knows she would lose.¹⁶

¹⁶ Gilbert (1994) has linked the physical reaction associated with shame to ranking behaviour in animals, whereby animals who assess a confrontation with another

Sophie expresses the extreme form of withdrawal in actually choosing not go anywhere or talk to anyone rather than be shown to be the inadequate and socially deskilled person she thinks she is. Molly also, in her childhood school memories, refers to her inadequacy and her smallness, and finally Rita describes her response to a situation where a man had exposed himself, making her feel humiliated but also feeling that her reaction to the situation was inadequate (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter ten).

In summary, all these accounts seem to confirm, as suggested above, that withdrawal is used as a defence to hide from shame, which implicitly proposes the existence of a shameful self as a given fact. This is a strategy identified by discourse analysts as 'everyday empiricist accounting' (Edward and Potter 1992:162), where the facts force themselves on the human actors who have an entirely secondary role (see also Gilbert and Mulkay 1984, McKinley and Potter 1987, Mulkay 1985).

This reading is further corroborated by some feminist literature. For instance, it has been suggested by researchers investigating gender differences in behaviour that women seem to find it more difficult to be assertive about their capacities in a social situation (Walkerdine 1992, Bartky 1990). Walkerdine has observed that, in education, although women tended on average to be better students than men, they displayed far less confidence in their ability to master the material (Walkerdine 1992).

This is consistent with Bartky's (1990) observation that women use what linguists call 'women's language', i.e. their speech is marked by hesitations and false starts.

animal as likely to lead to their defeat, show a similar bodily posture to shame behaviour: avoidance of the gaze, attempt to reduce body size, reduction of muscle tension etc.

They tend to introduce their comments with self-denigrating expressions like, 'You may think this is a stupid question, but...'. They often use a questioning intonation which in effect turns a simple declarative sentence into a request for help or affirmation. Also, there is often the excessive use of qualifiers, eg. 'Isn't it true that [x] might be...'.

In the two studies mentioned above, the behaviour of the female students was interpreted by the researchers to be indicative of a desire to take up as little space as possible, to be inconspicuous or even invisible. This phenomenon has also been identified as an important factor in the case of women suffering from eating disorders, where it has been suggested that anorexics seem concerned with not taking up too much space, a concern expressed physically in a desire to be slim and almost invisible. In Orbach's words:

"She has changed her body dramatically. She has become slimmer and smaller [...] She has agreed to take up only a little space in the world." (Orbach, 1993:10)

This in turn seems to find confirmation in the following account from Jessica about shame and dieting. However in the same account, the possibility of an alternative reading appears, where avoidance is not covering inadequacy but a much more complex situation:

Jessica:

I developed a eating disorder in my adolescence, I went onto a diet when I was 12 or 13 and didn't need to go on a diet at all, [...] you see when you are thin you are not dangerous, there is nothing to be ashamed of, about the feelings that you provoked, so you try to change your body/

In this extract 'disappearing' in the form of thinning out, of making oneself smaller, is construed as an attempt to counteract both shame and danger. The danger is

implicitly connected to sexual feelings, which also warrant the shame. What I want to focus on at this point is the word 'danger', which does not suggest inadequacy but power - even if negative power. It is also suggested, however, that this attribution of negative power comes from other people and the feelings provoked in them, which Jessica construes as her responsibility. It could be argued that her account strongly suggests a power she felt she had, but which became problematic in social situations. The issue of the split between the private 'I' and public self, already mentioned in the previous chapter, will be looked at in depth later in this chapter. What I want to pursue here is the possibility of suspending the reading of avoidance as connected to a inadequate, shameful self.

Paula for example, described a constant pattern of avoidance and silence in her life when confronted with shameful situations: "I wouldn't talk about it [...] I would lie or pretend I didn't know what they where talking about". Referring to another situation, she said "when I remembered I had the same reaction, I just could not speak, I had nothing to say and I just wanted to forget, not to think about it [...] a refusal to face up to it".

She had been talking about feelings of inferiority and being different from others, thus implying that she hid in shame. And yet, in one of the shameful situations she reported, she had 'accidentally' head-butted a man she was angry with leaving him with a permanent scar on his forehead and in another she told me of having vomited on a man who had turned down her loving attentions.

These two scenarios strongly suggest that the construction of the self as shameful is preventing any alternative reading of the situation from emerging. Paula manages in this account to position herself as unthreatening and free of blame due to her taking the position of being inadequate and shameful.

The existence of alternative and contradictory subject positions which would not base withdrawal on the inadequacy of the self is clearly expressed in the following extract, where Sarah is talking of what had caused her to feel shame in her childhood.

8.2.1 Sarah's Account

B: Was it [shame] about not being good enough?

S: Or too good/ so being the last one to be chosen, but also if I was chosen, or being special in some ways, I mean, I must have been quite bright and I started school early and I have a brother two years older than myself and I went through the infant classes quicker than he did, so I was actually in the same classes with him at about seven and I would feel quite embarrassed when the teacher would ask me to do things/ obviously I also felt proud of the capacity side (.) if I was chosen to do things, I remember being chosen to present the headmaster a bunch of flowers on [inaudible] day, so being the one, the goody who was chosen to (.)

This account constructs the shameful self in two opposite ways: there is shame for being the last to be chosen (shame for failing), but also shameful for being chosen (for being special). This is accompanied by another contradiction her expression of the embarrassment of being singled out as special and, in the following line, the pride of her capacity. This is in total contrast with the polarised outlook offered by the literature on shame which states that shame is the opposite of pride and that, while shame is the accompaniment to failure and lowered self-esteem, pride comes with success and increased self-esteem. Yet here there is attribution of shame to success.

Furthermore, because shame and pride are determined by social norms, certain actions will provoke shame and others pride. What, on the contrary, transpires from this account is that the same position of being successful is constructed both as shameful and proud at the same time. This, I would suggest, has some dependence on the actors involved in negotiating the attribution of meaning. There is no indication that

the shame is constructed between Sarah and her teacher, who it seems was the one most likely to recognize the capacity she felt proud of. In fact, Sarah clearly locates the belief in her capacities not in herself, but implies that someone else must have thought that she was capable. This she accomplishes by phrasing it in terms of disbelief [I must have been quite bright] and positioning herself not as the agent of the judgement but as a passive object of someone else's judgement.

Later Sarah explains that her peer group had greatly influenced her feelings, as it was against her peer-group culture to show interest in school matters. This is hinted at in the last line when being the one chosen is described as the 'goody', implying that being studious or the 'teacher's pet' constituted a betrayal of adolescent, anti-conformist rebellion against the adult world.

Alongside these already contrasting and coexisting scenarios, a third can be identified at the beginning of the extract, which Sarah focuses on immediately. This involves the introduction of Sarah's brother, two years older than her. The account implies that her brother is less bright and less academically successful than Sarah, to the point that she not only caught up with him, but despite the age gap was still the one chosen as special in the class. I want to argue that this situation presents a moral dilemma: if Sarah positions herself as proud and successful, that automatically positions her brother as inadequate and shameful. This is why I think Sarah takes both subject positions at the same time, of being proud and ashamed of her success. This allows her to do well at school and, at the same time, to get on with her peers and not shame her brother. It also allows her to avoid challenging the obvious expectation that her brother should do better than her, I assume, because he is older and male.

An explanation of this type of dynamic in terms of gender has been offered by Gilligan.¹⁷

The problematic implications of this strategy will be discussed later in this chapter as a general theme; however, in relation to Sarah, by way of re-connecting this to the subject of withdrawal, I want to point out that later in her interview she stated that only in childhood did she do well at school and that since then she has avoided showing any special interest in something.

8.2.2 A Feminist Reading

It has been pointed out how competition and achievement are rarely straightforward for women and how even if women manage to achieve their objectives, they sometimes subvert themselves, denigrating any praise and attention they may receive. There seems to be an awareness or fear that their ambitious urges are 'improper', or even destructive (Coward 1992). These observations, along with others on the same lines (Walkerdine 1990, Bartky 1990) raise the question of why being weak, ignorant or invisible seem to be 'easier options' for some women.

¹⁷ "[...] men and women may perceive danger in different social situations and construe danger in different ways - men seeing danger more often in close personal affiliation than in achievement and construing danger to arise from intimacy, women perceiving danger in impersonal achievement situations and construing danger to result from competitive success. [...] the danger women portray in their tales of achievement is a danger of isolation, a fear that in standing out or being sent apart by success, they will be left alone." (Gilligan, 1982:42)

Some of the answers to this question offered by feminist and psychoanalytic writers have been reviewed in chapter three. Anthony (1981) for instance, talked of the shame syndromes in women as "constitutional, physical and psychocultural", due to the vulnerability of women's still emergent identity. He describes how women, in order to negotiate the historical submerging of their identity in the service of the male ego, have taken on a 'pseudo-identity' characterised by negative attributions of self-denial, general inferiority and shame. This is very consistent with the general identity transpiring through the interviews and would also explain how powerfulness and success would be experienced as unfamiliar and dissonant to a sense of identity built around inferiority.

In this context, Weldon (1988) talks in terms of 'success anxiety' in women which, she argues, could become the equivalent of castration anxiety ascribed by certain earlier writers. Gilligan (1982) too has examined this issue in terms of representations of women vested with positive and negative connotations: well-being and self-esteem, but also denial of responsibility and evasion.¹⁸ In addressing the meaning of morality for women, Gilligan looks at the attributions that success and ambition have for many women. She claims that being ambitious carries connotations of being 'hungry and selfish' and, using one of her interviewee's words, implies that "a person on the way up stomps on people, whether it is family or other colleagues or clientele"

¹⁸ "The 'good woman' masks assertion in evasion, denying responsibility by claiming only to meet the needs of others, while the 'bad woman' forgoes or renounces the commitments that bind her in self-deception and betrayal. It is precisely this dilemma - the conflict between compassion and autonomy, between virtue and power - which the feminine voice struggles to resolve in its effort to reclaim the self and to solve the moral problem in such a way that no one is hurt." (Gilligan, 1982:71)

(Gilligan 1982). Coward (1992) has also written about women's attitudes to self-advancement and their difficulties with the apparent connotations of competitiveness.

It has been noticed and criticised (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Segal, 1991; Coward 1992), that the attribution of women's distaste for power to women's 'intrinsically better nature' is now part of the prevalent cultural fantasies about women.¹⁹ This is certainly one of the implications of Gilligan's claim, for which she has been criticised (Segal 1991; Faludi, 1991). Gilligan believes that women are often caught in the opposition between selfishness and responsibility. And because women's lives are lived in response, guided by the perception of others' needs, they can see no way of exercising control without risking an assertion that seems selfish and hence morally dangerous.

Despite the fact that Gilligan does acknowledge that, while seeming to offer safety from the onus of responsibility, avoidance, withdrawal and drifting carry the danger of landing in a more painful confrontation with choice, there are some problematic implications with her position. The main objection I would offer, is that by looking at the situation as the effect of socialisation she firstly positions women as passive victims of a society 'out there'. Secondly, the negotiation with moral choice which women solve by rejecting power is presented as an intrinsic quality possessed by women, which makes them better human beings, thus risking falling into essentialism:

¹⁹ "Given a prevalent cultural fantasy of women as 'nicer' people, more caring, more nurturing - something bolstered first by feminist's ideas of uncompetitive sisterhood and solidarity and then by the New Age celebration of the nurturing feminine - there is a readiness to explain women's distaste for competitive situations as arising from their greater natural decency and kindness." (Coward 1992:42)

"The popularity of Gilligan's thesis, is due to the fact that it provides apparent confirmation of the wistful belief that women are less individualistic and selfish than men, that they are better attuned than men and more empathic than them to emotional and relational issues." (Sayers 1986:19)

It is understandable, considering that one of tasks Gilligan had set herself was to argue against a male-centred view of morality which penalised women, that Gilligan attempted to counteract the situation by shedding a positive light on women's choices. However she fails to see that this 'positive' outlook might legitimize women's inertia and glorify their passivity. Besides, by looking at avoidance and withdrawal as a personal, moral choice rather than as an ideologically meaningful subject position, we cannot investigate the complexities of the negotiation involved, the implications and the possibility for resistance which the position allows. These will be the focus of the discourse analysis to follow.

Before I move on to that, I want to briefly mention the relevance of envy to withdrawing from success. This is important because it points at the immediate advantage of positioning oneself as a 'nicer', non-competitive person, as it deflects envy. This is discussed by Jessica:

J: [...] the other thing I associate it [shame] with is envy, fear of envy and achieving, because I used to envy so much (.) maybe shame is a bit like, it translates other very powerful feelings like greed, envy, all those things and being ashamed becomes a way of reacting or playing out the experience that those feelings might provoke.

It is in this sense that Wumser talks of shame as a protection against envy through a technique called 'masochistic flaunting of degradation' which he describes in the following: "If I am suffering and low it proves that I can't be a threat to anybody and

I can't take the power away from anybody." (Wumser 1981:41) He commented further that masochistic submission is often better than the guilt of envy and rivalry. This kind of strategy is exemplified as an attack on the 'horrid self' that wants to take away from others what they own.

However, Jessica attributes shame also to an internal conflict about her own greed, envy and neediness, i.e. the resolution to the conflict is attempted individually and the problem is blamed on negative personal qualities. The link made by Wumser between envy, deprivation and unlovability is relevant to this dilemma and often (as it will be soon discussed), offered as the resolution of it. The exploration of issues of withdrawal, power and resistance, silence, shame and unlovability is the objective of the discourse analysis in the next section.

What I want to do now is to try to pull together some of the issues discussed so far by looking at an actual conversation and show how the solution provided in the extract is precisely the shameful unlovable subject position. I will look at two extracts, both from a interview with Molly. Here Molly reports two experiences of shame which I will look at separately.

8.3 The Silence

8.3.1 Molly's Account: Extract One

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | M: | When I was a child, I was seven and the teacher asked another child how |
| 2 | | much it is four times eight/ I knew it, but she had asked the other child who |
| 3 | | didn't know, and as probably she knew that I knew the answer she asked me |
| 4 | | and I said thirty-two, but I felt very embarrassed because the other girl didn't |
| 5 | | know the answer and the teacher asked me to stand up and to go to the |
| 6 | | blackboard and she gave me a stick and she asked me to beat the other child/ |
| 7 | | I didn't want to/ so she held my hand and forced me to beat her/ this gives |
| 8 | | me a sense of shame, very strong and I remember this as a very bad thing/ |
| 9 | B: | Why do you think you felt ashamed? |

- 10 M: Because I had no authority to beat the girl and the teacher I felt she was
 11 forcing me to do the thing that I didn't want to do, and she put me in front
 12 of the whole class to do a bad thing and because I knew the answer I had to
 13 beat another child, and it is a very strong confrontation because you have to
 14 beat the other one and I felt all these things even if I was only seven and it
 15 was very strong/ [...]
- 16 B: [And] after that you didn't want to say?
- 17 M: No, **never**/ I didn't want to because I didn't enjoy that the other ones knew
 18 that I knew something, I wanted to keep quiet, perhaps it had some effect
 19 until now because it was very strong/ [...]
- 20 B: But you felt ashamed/
- 21 M: Yes because I felt that I didn't want to do this, and I was forced to do it
 22 because she held my hand against my will and she forced me to, I couldn't
 23 escape from the situation/
- 24 B: And also do you think the fact that it was in front of the other children made
 25 it (.) it was important?
- 26 M: No, what made me feel strongly was what I did [it] against my will, because
 27 I remember that I wasn't looking at the class but I was looking at the girl, but
 28 I don't remember the girl I remember the stick and my hand doing a thing
 29 that I wouldn't like to do, this is what I remember, and the teacher behind
 30 me/ [...] I don't want to have the power to beat another one and the fact that
 31 I knew the answer gave me the power to beat another one who didn't know,
 32 it would have been easier to be on the other side, to be in the weak position/

8.3.2 A Psychoanalytic Reading

If we look at this extract from the point of view of psychodynamic defences, both formulations (shame functioning as defence and the employment of defences against shame), can be identified. Shame can be read as a defense against an unacceptable drive, whereby Molly's shame is a defensive reaction to her sadistic pleasure in hitting the other girl. Her sadistic impulses have been repressed through the 'damming' action of shame which has transformed pleasure into its opposite: a painful feeling. The splitting-off of the conflict is also highlighted by her dissociation from her own hand: it was the hand that did the bad thing, outside of her control.

At the same time this extract could be read from another point of view, which is what Molly herself suggests. Shame and the memory of it, which has persisted for many years, becomes the focus of the story. Molly is not in control; she is forced to do something unacceptable and experiences intense shame and embarrassment. This experience, a trauma, is at the basis of the shame anxiety. She then associates traumatic shame to situations of ‘knowing something’ and of ‘speaking up’. Therefore in order to avoid shame, she avoids situations which, through this association, would cause shame.

This reading of shame lies in between two of Freud’s models: in the affect-trauma model, shame results from a real trauma coming from the outside world, in the topographical model, however, shame *is* the trauma or the threat of trauma; at the same time it protects the psyche from the trauma of internal conflict.

In a psychodynamic reading of the text, Molly is isolated from the context. The events and the other actors in the external world are only functional, if not totally irrelevant, to the conflict which is viewed intrapsychically.

8.3.3 A Discursive Analysis

In the discursive analysis, I will move away from the analysis of intentions and hypotheses about the internal world and will look instead at the ‘social’ interaction. In the above extract, this involves three actors. As a result of their interaction there is the creation of a ‘shameful self’. I will take these three actors as the three positions provided by the account and look at them in relation to the power they carry.

One of the actors is the female teacher. She is in a powerful position due to her being adult in relation to children and being a teacher in relation to the pupils. She also holds power within a power/knowledge discourse. However this power is not represented as positive or desirable, but as cruel and sadistic. In complete contrast to the teacher's position, there is the girl who does not know the answer: she is a child, a pupil and she does not know.

Molly's position however, is at the centre of the action and is what I will focus on. She is in the middle: she is a child and a pupil, but she has knowledge. It is the knowledge that gives her the power, identified in the extract as a negative power: "the fact that I knew the answer gave me the power to beat another one who did not know".

From the account, one would assume that the shame was connected to having beaten the other child. To avoid this, one might expect that the lesson learned would be to refrain from physically beating others. But when Maria talks about how this affected her life, what she withdrew from was having knowledge, i.e. power: "I didn't want to [speak] because I didn't enjoy that the other ones knew that I knew something, I wanted to keep quiet". This suggests that the position of shameful is here constructed as being the one who knows. Hence, 'strong and knowledgeable' is shameful and has to be avoided, 'weak, ignorant, victim' is preferable: "it would have been easier to be on the other side, to be in the weak position".

However, there is a further subtlety in the text. The issue is not simply around who knows and who does not, but moreover by someone knowing that somebody else knows. This is first stated in lines 3-5 and reiterated in lines 21-22. In line 3 ("I knew it") there is no indication that the knowing is problematic. The situation becomes conflictual when the teacher knew that she knew (lines 4,5), i.e. when the

private 'I' that knows becomes public and is engaged in a social interaction. It is at this point that Molly becomes silent. I will come back to this very soon.

I now want to go back to how the silent subject is constructed as shameful. There are various avenues open to us in attempting to make sense of this representation; I will first consider the issue of conformity.

I have discussed at length the existence of cultural expectations vis-a-vis women's relationship to success and power in a patriarchal society. Molly's shame can be thus read as conformity to these implicit cultural norms, that by positioning herself as shameful Molly does not disrupt the cultural expectations of her. In fact she does more than that, because the shameful position in this case (particularly in the light of Gilligan's work), is construed as morally superior. This position could be taken to represent an application of what Wetherell et al (1987) have called 'practical ideologies', which allow the speaker to justify under a positive light her submission in a power confrontation.

Therefore her withdrawal from conflict and lack of rebelliousness is presented under the positive light of 'non violence' and refusal to be implicated in the abuse. This presentation of oppression as 'free choice' can be seen in terms of the Foucauldian idea of the 'docile subject', where physical or overt coercion becomes unnecessary as the subject 'chooses' to comply (Foucault 1977, 1977a). Ideology, it must be remembered, has as one of its devices to disguise real relations of power as something more acceptable, more benign, thus assuring the preservation of the power relation (Althusser 1971, Thompson 1975). In this instance, the shift from openly physical and psychological coercion to self-oppression is graphically represented. However, what is also stated very clearly in the text is that Molly does not really have a choice whether to be implicated or not.

Crucial to the analysis of this extract from a feminist standpoint, is the assumption that the account is located within a patriarchal society and that the interactions have significance (i.e. describe/construct) within it. The patriarchal ideology is hidden by the fact that the dynamic is totally negotiated between women. In this way the question becomes one of choosing what kind of woman Molly wanted to be, rather than what are the options open to women vis-a-vis access to power. I find it very significant that what is represented here is the absence of a positive representation of empowerment for women. This crucial factor is overshadowed by the presentation of the dilemma as a moral choice.

I have already discussed how Gilligan and Coward both pointed out how one of the discourses often employed by women to justify their absence or 'free refusal' to have access to positions of power, is the morally based discourse that doing so would be at the expense of others. This refusal is further fuelled by the construction of women as 'better human beings' who take other people into account when making decisions.

I have also expressed my reservations with this claim. One of the most serious is that power is taken out of its historical context and becomes a thing *per se*, rather than something that women could use to better their lives. In this instance, for example, Molly could have taken on the teacher's power and become a different kind of teacher or found some way to 'speak up' for the other girl. But by positioning herself as shameful, Molly construes herself as totally powerless, but as a moral being. This positions her as a 'nice' girl, who would rather sacrifice herself than hurt other people. This obviously does not exclude the shame for not having resisted.

Molly's reaction can also be read as a resistance to power which is oppressive; she can see what comes with having power and wants no part of it. In order to explore this reading I want to go back to the conflict between the private, knowing 'I' and

the silent, public 'I'. This can offer a different reading from the above. If we take the silencing as the action of power, it is still in the silence that we can find the resistance to the same power. This I identify in the discrepancy described above. The silencing is restricted to the public 'I', because Molly remembers that she knew; she says that she has *stopped saying*, not *stopped knowing*. The shame belongs to the public self. In this way I am reading Molly's silence as a way of distancing herself from an oppressive regulatory action she disapproves of (Bahvnani, 1990; Marks, 1993), as a strategy of opposition.

This is a very seductive reading of the text as it allows some space for defiance, but it also has serious repercussions for organized resistance. Firstly, I think that it is very problematic to analyze silence as a language, whether as communication or as strategy. Secondly, silence as a strategy has very isolating and limiting consequences; in terms of organized struggle it isolates women from each other, prevents the sharing of experience and contributes to the view that women's struggles are personal, individual.

And yet, from a merely rhetorical point of view, positioning herself as shameful allows Molly to hold both contradictory positions, at least for the time being. In the second extract however, that the two readings I have suggested so far are represented again and the position of silence is taken to its consequences.

8.3.4 Molly's Account: Extract Two

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | M: | [...] put down, yes, put down and humiliation and that you are not so strong |
| 2 | | and you don't know anything about something, you are not important, you are |
| 3 | | something, someone (..) |
| 4 | | I am thinking of another example, I must have been 6 and I was in the |
| 5 | | classroom and everything felt very strange, I had just began school and in the |

- 6 break we went to the playground/ the teacher said something very strange but
7 I believed her. She said to put a sheet of paper on your desk and think of
8 something to be drawn on it and you ask Jesus to come and draw it for you
9 (laughs) and I put my best pencil and I went to play and when I came back
10 there was nothing, I felt so..oh God...how could have I believed her? it was
11 a mixture of feelings...humiliated because I trusted her and nothing happened,
12 without power to go there and ask her "where is my drawing, you are a liar,
13 you are not correct" and because I didn't talk I felt ashamed because probably
14 to talk is important, to free the feeling, but I didn't/
15 B: And what did you do?
16 M: Nothing, I looked for the paper and I felt that Jesus didn't love me, I am not
17 so good to be loved, because the teacher had said if your behaviour is good
18 in the playground...so I thought I had behaved very bad and it was my fault
19 (laughs)

8.3.5 A Psychoanalytic Reading

In this extract the focus of the investigation is not the action anymore, but the self. This is crucial in that, as I have pointed out in the Introduction, it can make shame into an experience of traumatic proportions.

Shame is related to the self in three ways: Firstly, there is the shame of the powerless (line 13), who has been tricked and humiliated (lines 12,13). Secondly, there is the shame of having fallen short of an ideal, since she had not spoken up (lines 15, 16). In both these cases there is a sense of narcissistic mortification. Thirdly, shame is also attributed to being unlovable (lines 18,19): I am ashamed because I am unworthy. This could also be read as compensation for the grandiosity.

At first glance, this extract seems to describe a very similar situation to the first account as it takes place in the classroom, I assume with the same teacher and at around the same time. There is, however, a crucial difference: this time there are only

two people involved: Molly and her teacher and Molly is at the receiving end of the abuse. This takes away Molly's choice whether to be implicated or not.

Looking at the words chosen here, it seems that humiliation is what bridges the two accounts. In the first three lines, Molly gives a list of the components of her experience of shame: humiliation, being put down (twice), weakness, being unimportant (inadequacy, smallness perhaps) and ignorance. Here is the first contradiction: in the first account Molly *did* know and, as she reiterated many times, it was precisely the fact that she knew that gave her the power to beat the other child. And yet here she is describing as shameful the position where "you don't know anything about something". Who is this 'you'? I think it can be read in many ways. As I pointed out in chapter six the use of 'you' as impersonal pronoun can be seen as a device to involve the other (in this case, myself as interviewer), into an assumed shared experience. It implies either that I know what she is talking about through my own experience, or that everybody feels humiliated and unimportant when discovered in ignorance. This could then be taken as a device to distance herself from the experience and its implications by locating it in an impersonal field, or as a device to connect herself to the girl who was beaten, i.e. at that point Molly is talking from that position.

This takes us to the next line (line 3) where she makes a very ambiguous statement. She says that being in that position makes you feel "you are something, someone". Here she seems to be saying two contradictory things. On one hand she is referring to depersonalisation: that position makes a person into an object, a thing, one loses identity and humanity. On the other hand however, she is saying that that position makes you into someone, it gives you identity, i.e. it gives some space for action and identity *per se*, however painful and problematic. This could be connected to the conflict, highlighted earlier, that takes place when moving from the private 'I' that

knows or doesn't know (as is the case here), and the public 'I' and how it is seen in the interaction.

This discrepancy can be also identified in the description of her being in the classroom where everything felt very strange. The site of power feels unfamiliar and with unknown rules. Molly attempts to portray this situation again in terms of moral choices. In line 7 she hints at this, implying that she starts from a position of trust and that despite her knowledge that the teacher was saying something rather odd, she chooses to trust her, to believe that she was not lying. In this way Molly establishes her fairness, her naïvety and her goodwill in the situation. The fact that she uses the same word (strange) to describe both the classroom atmosphere and her teacher's suggestion, allows her to suspend her judgement further by implying that perhaps the teacher's suggestion was strange because everything else was strange. This allows Molly to avoid having to consider the teacher as a liar or herself as gullible. Her goodwill, fairplay and capacity to assess situations is further established by her gesture of choosing her best pencil, the only one appropriate for Jesus.

It is what happens between lines 11 and 19 that interests me most, as Molly is forced by the events to offer a reading of the situation with the implied positioning for herself. She offers two alternative and opposite subject positions: the angry or the shameful position. In lines 14-17 there is the position of anger: Molly hangs on to the knowledge and rebels to the teacher. This position is construed around finding power in one's knowledge. By positioning herself as the knowledgeable, she positions the teacher as the liar. In this context speaking up is clearly presented as empowering and liberating.

The other position follows this in lines 16-19. This is the silent, shameful Molly who turns the anger against herself, denies her knowledge and power and submits to the

teacher's representation of events. This is warranted by her positioning herself as unlovable, which reinstates the teacher's authority. It could be argued that this was never fully accomplished, as the position of shame allows Molly to remember the abuse and that she knew she had been wronged.

One could question what benefit challenging the teacher could have brought her, in a situation where there was no real alternative to the establishment. But I am also aware of the fact that subject positions have implications for one's sense of self and self-esteem. Molly's example illustrates how the absence of alternative positions may favour the employment of individual measures with high costs for one's sense of reality.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how speech can perform social action by presenting historically and ideologically constructed versions of reality as facts. These versions of reality function as 'practical ideology' (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). I have suggested in this chapter that women positioning themselves as shameful has that function. I have claimed that by positioning themselves as shameful, the women interviewed are not just describing reality, but constructing a version of reality that allows them to avoid wider cultural issues and conflict about their access to power.

I have also argued, in this and in previous chapters, the impossibility of avoiding these issues which in fact are negotiated in speech. I have deconstructed the participants' presentation of withdrawal and silence as defences against their unavoidable shameful exposure warranted by the positioning of themselves as shameful. Through a discursive analysis of extracts from the interviews I have

illustrated how this action is accomplished in practice. I will now briefly discuss some implications of the conclusions reached in this chapter.

If we reconnect the participants' construction of themselves to wider political issues, their silence and withdrawal has serious implications in terms of women's complicity with reproducing what has always been an 'acceptable', but highly limiting and self-destructive view of women. Women's positions in these extracts seem to be in line with women wanting to see themselves as altruistic and selfless, not as competitive and needy. This, it has been argued, is due to the fact that 'traditional womanly values' still grant women some power (Coward, 1993). Women might try to access at an individual level some of the power they are excluded from at social level in a patriarchal society; but in this way leaving social power structures unchallenged.

What I have argued in this chapter and will be argued further in the next two, is that this type of strategy is not very successful at an individual level either. On that scale, I am concerned with the effects of a continuous undermining of one's sense of reality, knowledge and identity. In the next two chapters I will attempt to explore some of the implications for women's sense of self in the section on the Façade and in the following chapter on women's capacity to resist attack.

CHAPTER NINE:

The Shameful Self behind the Façade

9.0 Introduction

The previous chapter questioned whether or not withdrawal functioned exclusively to protect women from shame and argued that this version of events performed other ideological functions. I first looked at how their withdrawal was justified by the participants by positioning themselves as inadequate and shameful. Withdrawal was therefore presented as a necessary strategy to safeguard themselves against further exposure of such inadequacy. In contrast with this view, I argued that these strategies (designed to ‘protect’ women) can also be deconstructed as individual solutions to wider social issues with a deeply disempowering and confusing effect on women’s sense of identity and capacity.

The theme to be analysed in this chapter starts from these conclusions one and further develops some of the implications. Continuing the examination of strategies employed by the participants to protect themselves from shame, I will now focus on the strategy of hiding behind a ‘façade’. I will be looking at the split between what women describe as their internal experience of themselves - presented as the ‘true self’ - and what is presented to the world on the outside: the ‘façade’.

In this dualistic split, the external public self represents women in their competent and successful actions. Therefore, while the façade is cathected with positive feelings, the true self is experienced as faulty, inferior and shameful. However, as the external

self is constructed as a mere façade (i.e. false or inauthentic), even the positive feelings associated with it are devalued and disbelieved. This section explores the disempowering implications of this phenomenon.

The ‘façade self’ (similar to the defences of withdrawal and silence), rests on the construction of women as inadequate and shameful. My claim is that the splitting of the self requires considerable mental gymnastics and ultimately a denial of one’s sense of reality. I want to explore whether the extracts offer the possibility of alternative subject positions which women could take. Hence, the theme will be explored in a way that takes in some of the broader social issues to which it alludes (Burman and Parker 1993), as well as what function the accounts serve; in particular what version of events that account is designed to counteract (Coyle *et al.* forthcoming, Potter and Wetherell 1987, Marks 1993).

For example, it has been previously suggested that a position which represents women as powerful and successful carries the threat of rejection. This threat however, is not linked by any of the women interviewed to ideological pressure or social coercion; instead they attribute it to their own unlovability.

9.1 Psychoanalytic Framework

The relation of shame to the self has been widely studied (see Introduction for a review). One of the functions of shame is to act as a boundary between the private and public aspects of oneself (Pines, 1987). Shame, as the guardian of boundaries, protects the separate, private self and prevents intrusion. Shame guarantees the self’s integrity. Therefore shame anxiety is experienced when one’s dominion over their ‘innermost self’ is threatened or temporarily shattered (Wumser, 1981). More

specifically, shame is the experience of being exposed in a situation where the self is seen as a lesser, inadequate self.

Shame can be used to bridge contradictions, interweaving inner and outer reality. The specific content of the two split realities can vary, but in all experiences shame indicates some profound personal flaw (Wumser, 1981).

Scheff (1990) also links the intense pain of shame to the exposure of personal inadequacies and he describes how: "each person has spent what feels like an eternity of time and effort in constructing a competent, valuable self. The threat of losing that self may be more painful than the threat of losing one's life." (Scheff 1990) He seems to imply that it is the construction of a valuable *public* self, the loss of which would lead to such despair.

The construction and the loss of the public self, or 'loss of face', has been linked to the root of the word shame. As seen in the Introduction, the word comes from the Old High German root, *scama*, "to cover oneself". *Sceme* is "cover, mask". In shame one wants to change oneself into another being or to hide - not to be seen any more. The mask (or facade), changes the shameful one who fears to be seen, into one who is seen and is strong. Shame is the wrath over one's imperfection and limitation (Hegel in Wumser 1981:306).

The above suggests that shame experiences which affect the self are likely to involve feelings of inadequacy, which has been widely discussed in the literature reviews (Introduction and chapters one, two and three). In the context of this chapter I will assume that when the participants refer to fear of being exposed in their inadequacy they are talking of shame.

9.2 Grounding in experience

The above descriptions of shame are consistent with experiences reported by women of a constant, underlying anxiety of being exposed, of people seeing ‘who they really are’, which is presented as shameful and hidden.

The following extracts were selected from sections in the interviews when women elaborated on their emotional experiences of shame. At this point shame was often referred to, probably to explain in greater detail the various emotional responses they had had in that situation to one or more feelings belonging to the shame family, e.g. small, stupid, inadequate (see Introduction for a discussion on the shame family of feelings).

Sandy:

(.) I suppose it goes back to this idea of what I think I must be in public, this façade will be broken and although this is a façade I am not very fond of, the thought that somebody might see through it, is appalling/

Tania:

[...] when I was adolescent there was a disparity between the way I acted and the way I felt inside, otherwise I couldn't have coped, and it was always very difficult, so really something didn't develop/

Sonia:

It somehow feels much more calamitous in a situation not with friends, you feel almost unmasked (.) [...] That is quite specific [...] that is just another facet of the fact that I would not like to get caught out looking stupid, sounding stupid/

Mae :

[...] people from the outside are always telling me 'you must be joking, you can't possibly feel inadequate', but that is literally the way I survive, I am not going to allow myself to show that inadequacy and I hide it constantly, constantly/ in any situation,

Vanessa:

[...] I felt as though I had said something really ignorant (.) and I could feel myself withdrawing from what they were saying, putting on a façade maybe and taking on board what they were saying and acting as if I was admitting that I was wrong, I felt I was wrong/

Sandy defines her public persona as a façade, reconfirming the split between an implied private self and the public/performance façade-self. The fact that she is 'not very fond of' this façade could be taken to mean either that she does not like it very much or that there is no emotional attachment to it, implying a further detachment.

The split between performance and action is also present in Tania's account, suggesting that her feelings were kept private and inaccessible. She presents this split as a defensive strategy which enabled her 'to cope'; however she also adds that it was very difficult to keep the split and that it had some negative effects which she describes as 'something did not develop'. What did not develop is left unsaid; it could be a sense of self which is experienced as solid and not split off, or some other nameless potentialities. What matters is that there is an acknowledgment that this supposedly defensive split has had repercussions on her development.

Sonia, on the contrary, highlights the usefulness of the mask which prevents others from "catching her out" "looking or sounding stupid'. The looking and sounding suggest that again we are dealing with social performance. On similar lines, Mae stresses the usefulness of hiding behind the mask which covers an inadequate self. Similarly, for Tania this split is presented as necessary for survival. Finally there is Vanessa who also talks of a façade behind which she protected herself, but her account provides a very good illustration of the complexities and drawbacks of this defensive strategy.

Vanessa first constructs the façade as a diplomatic exercise whereby, following the embarrassment and humiliation (see chapter eight for the full quote) she disengages herself, which supposedly allows her to continue functioning in the situation. She pretends to take on board what they are saying and acts ‘as if’ she were admitting that she was wrong. This implies that Vanessa clearly thought she was not wrong, but strategically pretended so, while managing to retain the belief in what she knew. But her final statement ‘I felt I was wrong’ suggests that this belief could not be held in the face of external attack and that it did affect the way she felt about herself.

What I find striking in these accounts is the implication that the façade not only fails to protect the self from negative attribution from the outside, but neither does it allow the positive, hidden qualities on the inside to express themselves.

In other words, the use of a façade does not seem to be very functional at all; unless what is hidden is really shameful it seems to have hardly any usefulness at all. I think that this is the reason why the shameful self is constructed as a given, an obvious fact used to warrant the employment of a façade. Hence not much is said about the façade/mask, except that its validity is warranted by the anxiety expressed at the thought of losing it (calamitous, appalling thought). This attributes the façade with positive, strong, protective connotations.

Much more is said, on the other hand, about the hidden self, which by definition is presented as the true self. This second representation of the self is stupid, appalling, silly, totally inadequate. These constructions prevent the emergence of alternative readings. What these alternative readings might be and what implications they might have for women is what I will explore in the second part of this chapter. I first want to investigate further the implications of presenting one’s self as a façade and how it has been linked to women’s position in society and to shame.

It is very difficult from the above extracts to draw conclusions carrying relevance to broader social issues, because the experience of having a façade is, in every case, described as a very personal or isolated event. I suspend the belief that these experiences are due to the individual women's incompetence and shift the focus to an extract where there is more information on the split between the public façade and the 'true' self. I have selected as a starting point part of the interview with Sonia (see chapter seven for the full extract where it was discussed in relation to the feminine body).

Sonia:

[...] that's why I say I am quite happy with myself physically because I still think I have a physique of almost like a teenager, so I if I took my clothes off and look at this body it does not look like a 47 years old body/

In this extract the body is presented as the façade. I want to refer again to Irigaray (1974) as I find her ideas useful for the exploration of women's multiple use of façade and in particular of the body as façade. I have already looked at the implications of Irigaray's theory of women's body as commodity (see chapter seven); I am interested here in the implication of women's 'acting' their social self, as discussed above. Irigaray argues that, deprived of the 'phallus' currency (the only currency available in a male-dominated market), women's only choice is to act 'as if she had it'. In other words, women are not attributed any value per se, nor is there any possibility of a representation of her value 'for her and by her', which could bring her into the system of exchange as something other than 'object'.

I argued in chapter seven that in Sonia's account, the teenage body was constructed as positive and desirable, while to her the forty-seven year old body was shameful and had to be hidden. I want to argue further that the teenage body is constructed as a façade charged with value; a value, however, based on a lie because Sonia *is* 47 years old. In this case the façade shows the lived experience of the absence of

alternative positive representations of ageing women. In the extract there were alternative sources of pride: the studies abroad, the exciting past - but the function of those events was presented as useful as long as it added value to the façade and credibility to the teenager appearance ("one's vitality and contentment shows on one's face and that's why I say I am quite happy with myself physically because I still think I have a physique of almost a teenager"), instead of being used to strengthen the 'true' self and make the facade less necessary.

It is in this context that Irigaray argues for a different meaning of shame for women than the one attributed by Freud. In 'The Shame that Demands Vicious Conformity' Irigaray (1974) offers an acute symbolic representation of the price involved in relying on a façade of value. In contrast with Freud's statement that 'shame' will remain a testimony of the deficiency of her genitals (Freud 1933) she argues:

"Shame will be the remainder, in reverse, of the compromise and the disavowal at work in the fetish. [...] How can one trade on something so empty? To sell herself, woman has to veil as best as she can how price-less she is in the sexual economy." (Irigaray, 1974:115)

Irigaray warns further about the double-edge function of the façade:

"[...] Almost imperceptibly, the wrapping will have brought Nature and her work into a fetishistic economy by hiding all she is capable of producing and preventing us from appreciating it. [...] But *the contradiction is already implicit in the veil* ("glossing over") Freud talks about, in the *duplicity* of that veil's function. Used to cover a "lesser" value and to evaluate the fetish, it will equally serve to conceal the interest afforded by what it claims to protect from devaluation..." (Irigaray 1974:116)

Irigaray seems to suggest here that, constructed to hide a lesser value (in the extracts the shameful and inadequate self), the wrapping in fact prevents the real value from being known. Before I move on to exploring this duplicity and what else the façade could be hiding, I want to look at what constitutes women's 'façade', public self according to some other feminist writers.

Two avenues of explanations are suggested: one which follows the relation between shame and conformity as a way of avoiding rejection; the other which relates to 'fear of success'. The two are connected by the fear of being rejected because unlovable.

Many of the feminist explanations seem to describe the phenomenon only in terms of women's being in the position of oppressed. Susie Orbach (1987), for instance, suggests that in a patriarchal society, women enter the world beyond the home as guests and not principals. Therefore women are required to accommodate themselves to the public sphere and to others in private. If not as midwives to the activity of others, their presence still has to be unobtrusive. They must conform to prevailing masculinist values and accept entry on that basis (Orbach 1987).

Scheff (1990) offers an alternative way of looking at this dynamic which captures some of the complexities of the process of negotiation involved in the imposition of power. Scheff's interest is in how shame leads to collusion by way of a 'deference-emotion' system. A deference-emotion system is described as one which compels conformity to norms exterior to the Self by informal but pervasive rewards and punishments. Anticipation of rejection following embarrassment, often in a subtle form, Scheff claims, is among the most powerful control mechanisms. He argues that people who conform are unable to face a conflict which might expose a perceived deficiency in themselves. This view is consistent with the experiences in the above extract and in the previous chapter. Scheff also stresses how independence requires

the capacity to face opposition without a lowered sense of personal worth. This view is supported by the extracts (see for instance Molly or Vanessa in chapter eight) which suggest women's incapacity to rely on their self-esteem to resist collusion.

Several feminist writers have looked for explanations of women's pervasive low self-esteem. Bartky (1992) for instance, attributes the lack of belief in oneself to the corrosive nature of shame which prevents feelings of success and power to attain the level of belief. A vicious circle thus seems to exist between shame and embarrassment which lower self-esteem, which in turn leads to the deference-emotion system. This prevents the identification with more positive self-images which could increase self-esteem.

When looking for the roots of women's uncertain sense of self-worth, feminist writers tend to attribute it to processes of socialisation. This is extremely useful in acknowledging the implications of patriarchal societies for women, but unfortunately they rely on individual/society, oppressor/oppressed dichotomies which hinder the recognition of women's implication in the process of oppression.

According to Valerie Walkerdine for example (*Femininity as Performance* 1990), women are used to performing, adapting to a series of roles. The following account is a good illustration of a lived experience of a woman playing different roles.

12.3 Mae's Account: Extract One

M: Sometimes if I am into a party mood, I can be shocking, I can drink too much, you can drink with the boys, it depends, you kind of clue into what people want, do they want you to take them out of themselves, are they trying to have a party through you, are they depending on you to liven things up, you can actually clue into those things or do they want to sit down and have a very intimate chat with you in a corner, you clue into that and play the role

of what they want you to be and in that way you gain acceptance/ [...] I can do it in all sorts of ways, can dance on the table or let's be intellectual/ [...]

According to Walkerdine, however, underneath these roles there is a repressed core, a true self, which has been inhibited, clouded by the layers of social conditioning. These, she argues, are part of a process of gender socialization which condition women into passivity. She thus implies that due to socialisation, women's potentialities have been thwarted and their capacity for self-reliance reduced. On similar lines Gilligan (1982) highlights the impossibility of self-development in a society which, although affirming publicly a woman's right to choose for herself, the exercise of such choice brings her privately into conflict with the conventions of femininity, particularly the moral equation of goodness with self-sacrifice. Therefore, although independent assertion in judgement and action is considered to be the hallmark of adulthood, it is rather in their care and concern for others that women have both judged themselves and been judged (Gilligan 1982). Therefore, Gilligan suggests, women still gain acceptance in the form of self-denial and passivity.

As early as 1934 the psychoanalyst Karen Horney (1967) considered shame and self-esteem crucial factors in the oppression of women. She held that it was essential for the understanding of some symptoms of her female patients which she attributed to women's struggle to move beyond their traditional roles.

"[...] with her lowered self-esteem of centuries' duration, [...] women who nowadays obey the impulse of the independent development of their abilities, are able to do so only at the cost of a struggle against both external opposition and such resistances within themselves as are created by an intensification of the traditional ideal of the exclusively sexual function of woman." (Horney, 1967:183)

Horney observed that certain patients, although presenting no prominent psychopathology, seemed to have difficulties in their relations to men and to work, which they blamed on their personalities. These difficulties often caused considerable impairment in the development of their potential. Horney describes the phenomenon as a "general feeling of being different and inferior, which they attributed to an inherent and hence unalterable predisposition." (Horney 1967:186) These feelings of deep insecurity and inadequacy referred to some real or imaginary defect, becoming self-tormenting complaints invariably associated with a deep feeling of shame.

All the above suggests that through a combination of pressures coming from inside and out, shame confirms women's belief in themselves as inadequate and intrinsically inferior. Furthermore this belief is attributed to a supposedly inherent and inalterable disposition. However, what I am also arguing is that this is employed by women for specific reasons and purposes; one of which being the attempt to deal with conflictual demands and experiences. I claim that this confuses women further about their value and power.

9.3.1 The Other Story

Although I have reached similar conclusions to Walkerdine's I find myself dissatisfied with a lot of the previous explanations as they do not allow space for the possibility of a different story. For instance, rejection is not only feared because of inadequacy but also because of being powerful and successful. As discussed in the previous chapter success might provoke rejection, on the one hand because it would mean transgression of what is the expected passive position for women and on the other, because would invite envious attack. However, the employment of a façade

disguises this dynamic and attributes the rejection to what is experienced by women as their intrinsic unlovability.

Walkerdine (1990) also stresses that it *is* possible to tell a different story: one of success. The example she gives mirrors situations reported in the interviews in this study:

"[...] received more or less straight 'A's for all her work, but still cannot believe that the distinction belongs to her; it is as though the person with her name exists somewhere else, outside her body: this powerful person whom she cannot recognize as herself. Instead, she feels that she is hopeless, consistently panics about her performance and appears to have little confidence in herself. [...] I am sure this story has resonance for many women." (Walkerdine 1990)

I want to parallel Walkerdine's comments with Mae's story.

9.4 Mae's Account: Extract Two

- 1 M: At the end of my degree, honours degree, I was incredibly ill because of
- 2 feelings of inadequacy, hospitalized and managed to get all the work done, to
- 3 sit the exams and at graduation which happened four months later, I
- 4 discovered that I had been awarded the government award as outstanding
- 5 student, and I was shocked because again academic success is irrelevant
- 6 because I am not a perfect human being you see (laughs) and now five years
- 7 later I still don't believe it, don't really believe that they gave me the award
- 8 because I was a good student, but because I survived a bad illness/ [...] maybe
- 9 I don't trust them telling me the truth/

Mae could very well be the student described in Walkerdine's quote. What I think discourse analysis can add to her rendering of the situation is an approach which looks at the 'choices' as subject positions. The first advantage of this approach is that

it immediately validates the possibility of a different reading of the story. The first subject position in the account is that of the inadequate student. The feelings of inadequacy were such as to 'cause' her to be hospitalized. The self here is constructed as inadequate, fragile, ill. The comment at the end about the award being given to the survivor of the illness is the self she implies is the one worth recognition; the only one she obviously feels is 'her'. The other self, the outstanding student, she constructs as a lie and as such, she disowns. This is, more or less, as far as Walkerdine takes the situation.

I think it is much more complex than this. Firstly, if we consider Mae as a fragmented self, this account contains more than two fragments. The inadequate student is other than the survivor (although I think she attempts to polarize the situation between the two; I will soon get to why I think she does this). It is important to recognize the existence of this self which fights and wins because, although Mae disowns the outstanding student as a lie, a façade and not her true self, she does identify the *survivor* as her true self. In fact, the account implies that this is the self which got and deserved the award.

In this light then, we can make sense of the contradiction immediately introduced where, although distancing herself from the outstanding student, she says: "at the end of my degree, honours degree", where she takes the degree as her own and implies pride in the fact that it was an honours degree. This is further substantiated in the next line where she says that despite [my reading: Mae says 'and'] the illness she managed to get all the work done and sit the exams. I say 'despite' because it is obvious that the I who sat the exam was in conflict with something else. Mae constructs this as the inadequate self, but in lines 6-7 something else surfaces: "academic success is irrelevant because I am not a perfect human being".

A psychodynamic reading of the text could be helpful at this point as it encompasses the idea of conflict between different agencies in the psychic structure. So, for example, the dismissal of the success could be read as a harsh super-ego judgement motivated by guilt feelings due to conflicts around success. Or as the voice of a persecutory object or introject. I find these readings useful, not because they tell me what is 'really' behind Mae's feelings which she is unaware of, but because they allow for an understanding of 'meaning' as something fluid and constantly in the process of negotiation. This view is informed by some post-modernist critiques of the Freudian structural model, which looks at the relation between ego, super-ego and id as a conversation among three partners, all with interesting stories to tell, but not attributing a privileged voice to any of them (Rorty, 1986).

What matters here, going back to the subject positions, is to take this 'dismissive voice' to represent the active refusal of identification with the success. This is achieved by emptying it of value.

What is repeatedly stressed in this extract is that, despite the existence of alternative, more positive and successful representations of herself, there is almost a determination not to take that position. This is warranted by construing what is seen on the outside, the successful, positive representation, as a façade and a lie. This could also be read as a manoeuvre to avoid conflict and gain acceptance, but brings it back to a space where different actions within the text are possible, rather than resorting to external influences and women's passivity.

9.5 The True Self: Post-structuralist and Psychoanalytic View

The crucial issue underlying this chapter is the idea of self. To answer the question ‘what is the self?’ and even more so, ‘what is the ‘true’ self?’ would be a mammoth - perhaps impossible - task, far beyond the scope of this thesis. And yet, it is also central to this discussion, as to construe the self as a façade immediately implies the existence or the possibility of a self which is somehow more authentic than that.

This ‘true’ self can obviously be defined in many ways according to the frame of reference (see Neisser, 1988 for a inter-disciplinary review). Hence we can have a true self in moral terms, in psychodynamic terms (further splintered according to the school of thought), in philosophical and even in spiritual terms. For the present purposes, psychodynamically speaking, I am referring to the term ‘self’ as employed by Sandler (see Introduction and chapter two for a discussion) and in post-structuralist terms as a multifaceted, constantly negotiated self (see chapter four).

These terms are far from being adequate; in fact they can be highly unsatisfactory. Part of my dissatisfaction is due to my reluctance to relinquish my interest in the central importance of the complexities of an ‘inner world’ with its own system of internal relations and how this relates to intimate relations with oneself and other persons. These dimensions, I find, are rarely captured by the post-structuralist analysis of the self. Besides, my reservations participate in the wider current debate around modernity and post-modernity (Habermas, 1987; Hebdige, 1988; Dews, 1989).

I will first summarise some of the main positions in the current theoretical debate which may help to throw some light on the subject. I have not reached a firm conclusion as yet, however, as a second step I will explore the issues in question through a discursive analysis of some extracts.

I will start from Foucault and his attempted deconstruction on the theory of the subject. Firstly, Foucault rejects any essentialist claims of human nature, arguing for the totally historical nature of such a notion. This implies the abandonment of a self that is 'deep inside us' (Flax, 1990). Habermas (1987a) argues against the total abandonment of the ideal of self and subject and attributes Foucault's concerns - many of which he shares - to the confusion between transcendental and empirical modes of dealing with the issue. Habermas argues for an "incomprehensible element that cannot be reflectively retrieved [...] a primordial element prior to all production." (Habermas, 1987a:296).

Very similar to post-structuralist approaches to text, Habermas believes that the speaker and the hearer together construct a common 'lifework' made of a mutual understanding negotiated between the two, but which also uses a store of things taken for granted in the given culture. However, he claims that beyond all this, there remains an "unanalyzable, holistic background" (Habermas, 1987a:298)

It is in this multifaceted construction of self that Habermas finds the space for resistance. Ideas of reason, truth and justice, although never divorced from social practices, can never be reduced to any given set of such practices and are fundamental in serving as ideal referent to criticise the tradition we inherit (McCarthy, 1987). This is where we can perhaps find the needed bridge which would allow us to benefit from post-structuralism and psychoanalysis at the same time when conceptualizing the self.

To return to Foucault, he locates the constitution of the contemporary Western subject and our experience of subjectivity within disciplinary and confessional practices, with psychoanalysis falling within the latter group (Foucault, 1967, 1973). According to Foucault, psychoanalysis creates the subject and prompts the individual to exercise

surveillance upon herself which is, however conceptualised as 'self-knowledge'. This implies the existence of an individual self about which knowledge is possible (Flax, 1990:208). Foucault is not at all interested in the therapeutic contribution of psychoanalysis which he considers exclusively a normative device.

It is evident from what I have said above, that a Foucauldian formulation of self is inadequate and unsatisfactory from a philosophical and political perspective (Bernstein, 1985), a psychoanalytic (Frosh, 1991) or feminist perspective (Weedon 1994, Ramazanoglu, 1993). Some of these concerns are sensitively expressed by Frosh (1991), who obviously resists abandoning some of the positive connotations of a modern self. He therefore argues that a modernist self does not necessarily have to be pre-given and fixed, as essentialist and biological theories might have it, but is constructed and dialectical, with needs and desires which intertwine with the external world (Frosh 1991:19).

This individuals share in the social experience, but they can also resist it; in psychoanalytic terms this would retain the possibility of an ego capable of forming constructive and reparative object relationships even in the most dismal of circumstances. Therefore, Frosh argues, it is possible to find sources of resistance in the modernist self and, which I consider crucial, this would imply not having to abandon the belief in the possible existence of a central self and its potential for development (Frosh 1991:21).

Feminists have also criticised Foucault's disdain for a modern ideal of self. Flax (1990) for example, argues that one of the implications of Foucault's position is the reinstatement of another form of the polarity between a 'true' and a 'false' self. The 'false' self is unitary but essentialist, while the 'true' self is non-differentiated but totally historically or textually constituted. This dichotomy is partially determined by

the absence of any systematic consideration of gender and gender relations (Flax, 1990:210). Besides a ‘unitary’ self is not necessarily synonymous with a ‘core’ and although we can do without the first, Flax argues, we need to preserve the latter as precious, as anybody with clinical experience would know from working with people who lack a core self.

I want to explore very briefly these issues in the text, not with the aim of reaching any firm conclusion but more in the hope to illustrate some of the complexities of abandoning or embracing completely a modernist view of the self. The search for a central self is obviously what was behind my following question to Mae, which I think is worth looking into:

9.6 Mae’s Account: Extract Three

- 1 B: And if you were just yourself without tuning into what people wanted from
- 2 you?
- 3 M: I don’t know what that is, that is the crux of the matter, is that I find myself
- 4 at 36 not knowing who that is, [...]
- 5 there is a lot of panic in thinking ‘Oh God, I am going to walk into this room
- 6 and I have got to be something, somebody’ and panic undermines that
- 7 because if I then have to walk into a crowded room where I don’t know
- 8 anybody I would panic and I would have to work incredibly hard to be
- 9 centred in that situation/ I think what I am developing is quite an astute sense
- 10 of what people expect, one picks up all sorts of information on what people
- 11 expect from you/

My question shows immediately that I am using a modernist frame of reference as I am assuming that it is possible to refer to an entity [yourself] which exists independently of interaction with others. However, Mae obviously can relate to that and her answer validates the importance in her life of looking for a sense of self that might have those qualities. In fact she states that this search has been at the centre of her life.

There are other elements in Mae's account which are worth looking into. In line 6 she repeats almost exactly what Molly had said (see chapter eight), describing the process of self-identification when moving from the private I to the social self: "I have got to be something, somebody" where there is a dual reference to being a person (somebody), and an object (something).

Mae also refers to the additional difficulty in entering a room where she does not know anybody implying (and supported later), that she needs a reference point to 'construct' herself around. This is consistent with Lewis's findings about women's higher field-dependency and proneness to shame (see chapter two for discussion).

Finally, the last few lines of the account encapsulate what has been described in the feminist literature above about women playing a series of roles and adapting themselves to others' needs. This is introduced by the word 'astute' which implies a recognition of the usefulness of the skill. However when describing that skill, Mae states that, 'one picks up all sorts of information'. Is this usage of the impersonal pronoun hinting at the consequent loss of identity in being what other people want?

For the purpose of this thesis I have restricted myself to the construction of 'true self' and 'façade' as it is presented in each account. I now want to explore further other possible readings of the function of the façade. It has been pointed out that the abandonment of a modernist understanding of the self would also imply that all attempts at understanding history are fraudulent - both the collective history of a people and its culture and the private history of each individual self (Frosh 1991:29)

In the discursive analysis of the next extract, also from the interview with Mae, I want to attempt to use a post-structuralist view of the self, without abandoning completely a psychoanalytic framework. I want to argue that history is essential to

understanding the self; not in a deterministic way, but precisely because we do not live in a vacuum. History can be taken to be the context within which the subject is constructed and conversely, where the subject constructs a historical version of events. Without a historical framework, for example, we could not make sense of what Mae suggests is behind her fear of exposure and sense of inadequacy. The analysis of the next extract also ties in the subject of the previous section.

9.7 Mae's Account: Extract Four

- 1 M: [...] I have been told that I have a good singing voice and I have been told
- 2 that I am a very good pianist, by adolescence or earlier than that, feelings of
- 3 inadequacy actually led me to stop all that, actually stop playing the piano
- 4 completely, which appalled people who knew what I was like before I
- 5 stopped, it is only recently that I have actually found the courage to do chorus
- 6 singing and even in that situation when I go to rehearsals and I am in the
- 7 midst of whole people singing I feel inadequate and yet everybody on the
- 8 outside says 'no, you are OK, you have a very good voice, what is the
- 9 matter?'
- 10 (.) the thing is that as a young child I was singled out by [...] my mother is
- 11 a frustrated concert pianist, that encapsulates the story and she had four
- 12 children, I am the eldest and she allocated an instrument to each child, I came
- 13 first so I got the piano and I showed a talent, my mother's extraordinary
- 14 persistency and support, but I also showed talent in other activities at school,
- 15 the nature of the school is such that if someone shows a talent it makes other
- 16 people feel inadequate, if you are showing (.) shining there is an attempt to
- 17 block the light, not to encourage to shine and yes, from a very young age I
- 18 felt singled out and it got more and more complex as I grew older and now
- 19 I don't want to - that's rubbish (with anger) - of course I would like to be
- 20 singled out, of course I would like to achieve, of course I would like to be
- 21 wonderful, but I don't allow it/
- 22 B: Why?
- 23 M: Because it puts me on the outside, it makes me different from the rest, and
- 24 yet there is conflict between wanting to be different and yet it is scary out
- 25 there, it's too scary being different, it is easier to be just one of the crowd,
- 26 boring as hell, but easier/
- 27 B: Because its scary?

28 M: Yea, it is scary being on the outside saying "I am talented, I can do this, I am
29 good at this" it is scary because you have your own expectations to fulfil, you
30 have other people's expectations to fulfil and it puts you outside, you are not
31 run of the mill/

Mae begins by positioning herself as inadequate and claims that it is this feeling of being inadequate that stops her from performing. Recently she has found the courage to perform again, but only when she can hide or disappear in the chorus. What emerges after this representation and in contradiction with it, is that she is a gifted pianist. This is compared with her mother being a 'frustrated' pianist. In her account, she first praises her mother for her support, but then adds that the result of this, her 'shining' made other people feel inadequate, therefore the light was blocked.

A possible interpretation of this extract is that it contains an oblique reference to the ambivalent feelings of Mae's mother to her daughter's success. It could be argued that by 'shining', Mae was making her own mother feel inadequate, perhaps with the accompanying fears of provoking an envious attack from her mother, or internally from her maternal introject. This is only considered, in respect of this thesis, as a representation of the possible conflicts which might be evoked by success for women and how from this point of view, the rejection would definitively come from 'shining' too much; from being too good.

At that point, in total opposition to the initial representation, the possibility of achievement is presented as desirable and that it is Mae herself who does not allow it. The position of being singled out for her success is presented as highly desirable and wonderful, but at the same time as 'too scary', because it would make her different. What is scaring her then, as is stated clearly at the end, is the possibility of owning the successful performance; the 'façade' as the true self, talented and capable.

9.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored various readings of the employment of a 'façade' to protect the 'true' self constructed as inadequate and shameful.

I have looked at this first in the way it was constructed by the participants as a defence against the exposure of an inadequate self. I have then suggested a different reading of the façade which looks at it as a rhetorical device aimed at preventing alternative readings of the events. These alternative readings were reconnected to broader cultural issues. Finally I have looked at the 'façade' in terms of the current debate around modernist, post-modernist and psychoanalytic views of the 'true' and 'false' self. I would like to make few final comments about the issues discussed in this chapter.

The employment of a façade and the positioning of themselves as inadequate, I have argued, allows the participants to do various things: to function in public (Sonia) and to cope better with psychic pain (Tania) and to handle diplomatically otherwise very difficult situations by removing themselves and acting differently from the way one feels.

However, what the inadequate position does not allow women to do is to make a statement of their value. If we take Chasseguet-Smirgel's (1985) view, that we need other people's (society's) recognition of our value as a mirror to our sense of self, then 'hiding' must affect women's sense of self-worth. This is in line with recent feminist discourse analysts who claim that subject positions have implications for people's sense of self-esteem and sense of self (Burman and Parker, 1993) and with the wider debate on strategies adopted by people in conditions of oppression (Scheff 1990, Bartky 1990).

In the next chapter I will look at the disempowering implications of undermining oneself (low self-esteem), particularly in case of attack.

CHAPTER TEN:
Shame of the Victim

"He who despises himself still nonetheless respects himself as one who despises." (Nietzsche 1973:92)

10.0 Introduction

The previous chapters have explored how shame is constructed in the context of notions of an ideal, femininity and female sexuality. I have explored the ideological function of taking the position of 'shameful' and the consequences of resorting to the device of the self as façade. In all the chapters of this section, the focus was on shame as a negotiated construct and on the function in speech of taking the position of the shameful subject. Their other feature in common was the investigation of individual solutions to conflicts related to wider cultural issues.

I have looked at the implications of the individual solutions in relation to each theme, but I have also implied that these solutions (ultimately the fact that women constructed shame as reflection of personal faults), have a cumulative and damaging effect for women's sense of well-being. This cumulative effect is the focus of this chapter. In particular I will explore the effect it had on the women interviewed when under attack. I want to argue that positioning oneself as shameful is highly disempowering and debilitating. This is based on the claim that subject positions are not just theoretical constructs, but have implications for one's sense of self and self-

worth (Burman and Parker 1993); the investigation of these implications in real life is an important factor if discursive analysis aims at political changes.

Following on from the theme of the 'true self' as unlovable and unworthy, issues of low self-esteem and shame are developed further in the present chapter. I have repeatedly stressed how the discomfort of shame seems to stay with the women; here I want to suggest a link between that discomfort and the dislike of themselves which was repeatedly expressed and how the rage is turned against themselves in case of attack.

10.1 PSYCHOANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The notion of self-esteem implies a large measure of reference to internal criteria: we judge ourselves in relation to an internalized sense of 'who we are', as well as in relation to our community. We are aware of our self-judgements, however dependent these judgements may be upon the approval and opinion of others (Ablon, 1985).

It has been widely discussed in the literature how low self-esteem is related to conflicts in the self-representation (Sandler, Pines, Lewis, Wumser, Silberstein et al 1987) and more specifically, how loss of self-esteem derives from a discord between wishful self images and a self that appears to be failing, defective, inferior, weak and contemptible by comparison (Lewis, 1971). These conflicts are apt to evoke feelings of inferiority and shame (Sandler 1963, Wumser 1981). I have selected the following extracts to illustrate how the participants talked about themselves.

10.2 Grounding in Experience

Tania:

I also went through a long phase between five and twenty [when] I didn't particularly like myself, so this idea of this child malfunctioning was so hateful to me [...]

Sandy:

I can't imagine being a particularly pleasant friend, I don't see myself as particularly likeable, no I don't think I like myself [...] very self-centred and selfish, very self-conscious to the point of being almost narcissistic/

Dawn:

I must be a very boring person/

Sonia:

I think I am a bitch, I think I am intolerant and I don't hide my feelings very well/

Mae:

It ranges from really hating myself, walking around thinking 'you are just unbelievably useless' (.)

The Self represented in the above extracts is: boring, malfunctioning, 'a bitch', incapable of friendship, self-centred, selfish, hated and useless. The striking quality of these extracts is the vehemence used by these women to describe themselves. Also noticeable is the total lack of compassion or redeeming features which could counteract such harsh judgements.

Tania talks of fifteen years of self-hatred and describes herself as a 'malfunctioning child'. Tania was quoted in the previous chapter when she talked of the split between the way she felt inside and the way she acted as necessary for her to cope. The extreme quality of the feelings continues in the other extracts.

In the previous chapter I suggested a reading of the text which would involve the construction of a judgmental Self. This construct, influenced by a psychodynamic model of intrapsychic conflict, has the purpose of contextualising one of the possible relationships between different selves. This construct is helpful with Mae's extract, for example, where there is one self which is positioned as the agent and one as the object. The latter is constructed as 'unbelievably useless' with the former as the hateful self. Here the psychodynamic model can be abandoned, as I am not interested in using these two constructs as reflection of an unconscious, internalised intrapsychic conflict (which of course could be a very useful way of looking at it within a therapeutic psychodynamic analysis).

What I am interested in here is that there is the construction of a hateful/hated self with all the other attendant negative connotations. I have used Dawn's and Sandy's extracts in chapter six where they described their 'ideal self'. At that point, Dawn talked of her shame in not knowing what to do in social situations. Here she describes herself again within a social context, as a very boring person. Sandy's ideal self was also focused on social performance and here she describes herself as not likeable, unpleasant, very self-centred etc. These links suggest, firstly, that these representations of oneself carry a very strong emotional component and secondly, that the shameful self is constructed not only as inadequate and failing, but is also positioned as hated and under attack.

Scheff's (1990) idea of a chain reaction of shame and anger in the 'Shame-Rage Spiral' (Lewis 1971) can be useful here. According to Scheff, a chain reaction, which takes place between and within interactants, occurs when there is a real or imagined criticism, insult, defeat on one or both sides without the resulting emotions being acknowledged (Lewis 1971, 1987; Scheff, 1990). This idea was based on the extensive studies of serious pathological consequences of 'by-passed, unacknowledged

shame'. The term 'Shame-Rage Spiral', introduced by Lewis in 1971 and further developed in 1978, describes the sequence of emotions triggered off when shame is evoked and not dispelled. The most common sequence appears to be unacknowledged shame, followed by anger directed either at the outside, at the self or both (Lewis, 1978). Shame-rage is apparently experienced as being angry that one is ashamed; being ashamed that one is angry; or ashamed of being ashamed.

These 'spirals' of emotions may accumulate with such intensity and duration as to be experienced as overwhelming and unending (Scheff, 1987). At the core of this issue is the phenomenon of having emotional reactions to one's emotional reactions, which easily becomes a closed loop. These inner storms of shame and rage are very disruptive and can interfere with the person's capacity to deal with the world (Lewis, 1978, Scheff, 1987).

The above are extremely useful constructs, but as I have argued previously, they are also problematic. Firstly I have argued (chapter two) that Lewis was investigating the phenomenon within a clinical context with the pathologizing implications of the findings. Secondly, the nature of shame is never really questioned as a construct, but observed as a thing 'out there', as an agent which affects women. Hence the effects of shame are studied within a scientific model and the subjects are observed in the way they react to shame as if it were a disease.

On the other hand, if we abandon the inside/outside, individual/society splits, it is possible to see that the shameful self is constructed as inadequate and hateful which implies an expectation of hatred, contempt and attack, whether it comes from 'outside' or 'inside'. In other words, what I am arguing is that taking the position of shameful implies taking the position of inept and 'deserving of attack'. Furthermore

I want to argue that starting from such a subject position makes it very difficult to find any other explanation to events. The following extracts illustrate this difficulty:

Sonia:

I don't want people to think that I am obsessional about it because I am not/
I don't want people to think that I am neurotic, but I think they could
sometimes/ [...] that is the other thing 'does she over-react'?

This account shows the negotiation around whether to judge the self as obsessional and neurotic, which Sonia suggests takes place between her as the object and abstract, de-contextualised 'people'. She firmly states that she is not obsessional nor neurotic, but then instead of saying 'I think they might' which would place the responsibility on the other, she says 'I think they could' implying that sometimes they could be justified in doing so. The implication of the last sentence is that *she* is not sure if she over-reacts or not, implying that if she did, she would be obsessional/neurotic. It is also interesting to notice the use of scientific terms which would automatically position Sonia's behaviour as pathological.

Sandy:

I think it is that I probably worry unnecessarily about things other people simply would not have noticed, [...] it just wouldn't happen when I am rational about [it] I know [...] I blow it all out of proportion and I do it every time,

On similar lines to Sonia, Sandy positions herself as a worrier, irrational and someone who blows things out of proportion. This has similar implications of mildly pathological, hysterical behaviour. Contrary to Sonia, however, Sandy positions herself firmly as both the subject who knows that herself, as the object of this judgement, 'does it every time'.

Shere Hite (1987) describes this as the language of power used to undermine women's perception of reality and entitlement. She makes reference to a "big, foggy

area" of emotional inequality which manifests in private between a woman and a man. This psychological discrimination blankets everything and is built into language. So often women are labelled as 'neurotic' and 'insecure', especially when wanting to address an issue emotionally:

"These arguments usually happen in the middle of the night, there is nobody there but the man and the woman. The whole power of this society is behind the man using that kind of language and the worst forms of it are something like, 'You know, you are being irrational, when you get hold of yourself I'll talk to you'." (Hite in Brunt 1989)

Eventually the woman will feel as if she has a voice in her head repeating that she is a nag.

I find these explanations useful and problematic at the same time: useful because they do look at language and power of language to re/produce oppression and because they look at the multiple manifestations of inequality. In line with Hollway (1983, 1984, 1989), however, I find problematic how these positions are deterministically attributed to gender, rather than being looked at as 'gendered positions' which can be taken by both men and women. The latter standpoint would avoid positioning women as victims; it would make them agents in their oppression but also in the possibility of liberation. Therefore I would say that the fact that women repeat the self-derogatory remarks in their heads is not, as Hite claims, a mechanistic passive act, but shows how it is not only men who take the position of oppressors towards women (although they certainly do), but also women to other women and indeed to themselves.

What matters here is to see how incapacitating the process of self-doubt and self-denigration is for the women interviewed, as in the following case:

Judy:

That was the kind of thing I tuned into, and also I felt myself being the centre of this sort of focus and I could not deal with it because I thought I knew what they were doing and saying, whereas in fact it might have been my paranoia...

Judy states very clearly that the reason why she could not deal with the situation was that she could not trust her judgement. The contrast is between, 'I thought I knew what they were doing', a statement which is already wrapped in doubt and, 'in fact it might have been my paranoia'. She thus contrasts an assessment which she locates in the realm of thought and imagination, with the possible fact that she was paranoid, implying that what she thought was true might just have been the product of her imagination.

The above extract is the continuation of that in chapter seven where I looked at similar kind of uncertainty as to whether or not she was fat and who was thinking it; also, in the same chapter, where she describes not knowing if she is looked in admiration or derision. The following two extracts look at the effect of self-doubt when two of the women interviewed were confronted with wider issues of inequality:

Mae:

Sometimes it smacks me in the eye that I am not getting ahead as fast as I think I should just because I am female, but those are political issues and I am not a particularly political creature

Dawn:

I feel ashamed in certain situations of my background, like being in Oxford and being surrounded by people who are middle class, and being in a social situation and being asked what your father does and not accountant, not doctor, but painter and decorator and your mother is a cleaner and that annoys me because I shouldn't feel ashamed of my background/

In the first extract, Mae makes a strong statement of being discriminated against, which she then immediately undermines by distancing herself from a 'political self'

to whom she attributes the statement. I assume then that, either she considers it acceptable to take the position of 'female of unequal status', or that she believes in a private, rather than public/political solution to the issue.

Dawn also refuses to engage at a public level. In her extract, the subject, according to specific social norms, is positioned as comparatively inferior, inadequate, or at least different. The subject is exposed and made visible in her inferiority. Yet she feels annoyed with herself for feeling ashamed. In such a situation, the shame which is grounded in a social construct, is considered in personal terms and disallowed.

What is even more problematic with this solution is that, as it has been suggested in previous cases (for example Molly in chapter eight), shame functions as a reminder of a real unjust event. But Dawn constructs her shame as her personal failure. This is understandable if Dawn takes her shame to signify a betrayal of loyalty to her background; however within the context of Oxford University it is a fact that having a builder as father and cleaner for a mother does position her in the minority. In this context her expectation to get rid of the shame is not only unrealistic, but makes the social structure into her individual problem. It is the location of shame in this context which justifies her turning her anger towards herself, instead directed it against the inequality of the education system and privilege which comes from belonging to a certain social class.

I find Silberstein *et al.* (1987) on shame and gender very interesting in this context. They suggest that society fosters women's self-denigration and that the shame is even greater when blame is imputed as well, for the self is derogated not only for its initial inadequacy, but also for its inability to overcome it. The punishment also reinforces a view of the self as bad and is an attempt to rectify the problem rather than to reassert it.

This outlook on shame seems very appropriate to Dawn's account, as it is Scheff's (1990) suggestion that the "feeling traps", in which emotions of shame and anger intensify internally without finding full external expression, are characteristic of most systems of social deference or unequal status.

As pointed out in the analysis of the extracts, a similar dynamic can be identified in the way women describe their shame experiences. Often they accompany the memory with self-derogatory comments not exclusively directed to the content of the experience, but to the fact that they had the experience and the painful feelings in the first place. The pain caused by the perceived exposure of their inadequacy is coupled with their additional shame for having *felt* shame. As a result shame is feared, not only for the exposure involved but also for the self-attack it causes. This might in some ways justify the defence of withdrawal - to hide and avoid humiliation and shame which otherwise threatens to continue in never-ending circles.

I want to argue that the dynamic is more complex than this chain of causes and effects. I will explore this issue in the next extract, from the interview with Moira, where through various rhetorical devices self-attack is constructed as self-empowerment.

10.3 Moira's Account

- 1 M: I suppose I can be very self-punitive in that situation, my first reaction would
2 be to blame or devalue the other person, like put the person down, in a kind
3 of attack of rage but I suppose the second stage would be to take the blame
4 on myself, in the sense of kind of realize that it had something to do with me
5 therefore I would be responsible for it, it is kind of taking responsibility for
6 what you are feeling/
7 B: You also said self-punitive/

- 8 M: I think that would be the second stage/
 9 B: To punish yourself (.)
 10 M: Yes, punish myself or perhaps take the blame for it/ not necessarily punish
 11 myself I suppose, perhaps that what I think it is not necessarily the truth,
 12 realizing things that I haven't realized while in the process of being angry (.)
 13 in general I am quite self-punitive, I don't know if it make me feel better or
 14 worse actually/ (laughs) [...] it is more kind of mental or emotional, it begins
 15 with devaluing somebody and ends with devaluating yourself, like making
 16 you feel small, envious and bad, it is sounding quite awful but I don't
 17 necessarily see it as being quite bad/
 18 B: Why do you think you punish yourself or what do you punish yourself for?
 19 M: um (.) because I feel responsible for what happens to me and the way I am,
 20 so I suppose in a way it is a good thing because if you blame yourself you
 21 take responsibility for it therefore it is in your hands to change it (.) if you
 22 blame other people for doing bad there is nothing you can do about, while
 23 taking the blame for it is taking responsibility for it and change can come
 24 from that/

Moira starts her account with a choice: she could turn her anger against someone outside or against herself; through these two actions it is decided who is in the position of being blamed. However, from the beginning the two actions, although basically the same, are constructed as carrying completely opposite connotations. So that "to blame or devalue the other person" is described within the context of "a kind of attack of rage". Alternatively, "if you blame yourself you take responsibility for it". This could be interpreted as a very clear illustration of the 'shame-rage spiral' described by Scheff, because she is taking the blame for having her feelings.

I am interested here with the warranting strategy adopted by Moira, who has to justify doing something to herself which sounds quite awful (line 16), makes her feel small, envious and bad (line 16) and that she is not sure makes her feel better or worse (lines 13-14). The first option (turning her anger outwards), is rejected by representing it derogatively as an 'attack of rage', while the alternative is legitimised as positive action of taking responsibility for her feelings. Therefore, the desirable

course of action is that of self-blame, following the acceptance that the situation "had something to do with me" (line 4).

This, I think is the crucial point and on this statement hinges the whole strategy of warranting. Moira has to position herself as the one who in some way provoked or caused what happened to her. In lines 19 and 20 she specifies this by saying that she feels responsible for what happens to her and the way she is. We don't know what Moira is referring to, because she was talking in general terms, but I think the following quote, taken from a section of the interview just prior to the above extract, is relevant:

"I think when you manage to put a name to something maybe because it makes it more manageable, that is my main defence now, to be able to analyse the situation and understand what I feel and then why I feel that way and I suppose once you get there I suppose it becomes less relevant then, it does not stop the pain necessarily but becomes more manageable."

This helps to understand the process she is describing as Moira implies that any explanation is better than no explanation. But what she is offering in the extract is an illustration of the process of constructing an explanation and how any one reading is not 'intrinsically true' but becomes true through rhetorical devices and the way it is constructed in speech.

Hence, attacking the other person has implications of irrationality and would position Moira as out of control, incapable of thinking while dominated by anger, as is confirmed in line 12. This position warrants the second action of turning the anger against herself as being reasonable and mature.

The need for doing this is in the discomfort provoked by the event and the helplessness, which is implied in the lines quoted preceding the extract and in the extract (lines 15-24). The strategy is not totally successful as it does not really deal with the discomfort. This is acknowledged in line 15 where she does qualify it as self-punishment. The last few lines eventually construct the position of the 'responsible subject' which gives self-blame positive connotations; this is construed as self-empowering in that it allows her to be in a position of being able to change things.

This account contains two important elements. First (which takes us back to issues explored in previous chapters), Moira looks in herself for a solution to a problem which is inter-subjectively constructed. This solution involves positioning herself as the one who should be blamed, either for her action or for her intrinsic personal qualities (lines 4,5). Secondly, Moira presents this strategy as a defence against situations where she would feel helpless, implying that there are no alternative ways of understanding what is happening. (I will come back to this point with some relevant sociological analysis). However, this is contradicted in the text which does provide with an alternative position: legitimizing her anger and attacking the source of the discomfort. This alternative position of power is undermined and discredited as an 'attack of rage'.

Scheff's link of the 'shame-rage spiral' to Marx's concept of false consciousness is very useful in this context. As outlined in chapter two, Marx used the concept of false consciousness in an attempt to understand the acquiescence of subordinate social classes to systems of stratification which are patently unjust. On similar lines, Scheff looks at the role played by the subordinated classes' internalisation of the opinions and values of their oppressors in the perpetuation of their own oppression. If the members of the dominated class are ashamed of their own putative characteristics,

and this shame is not acknowledged and dispelled, it might result in a permanent undervaluation of self and overvaluation of the ruling class. In Italy for example, in the 1960s, when labour organizers sought to alert workers to the effects of educational 'streaming' on their children, the workers often rejected the organizer's analysis, saying, in effect, that the reason a child was being streamed into a career of manual labour was not discrimination, but that 'my boy is stupid, just like me.' This leaves the oppressed particularly susceptible to the shame-rage spiral.

This dynamic is highly present in Moira's extract, particularly because, as I have pointed out, for the warranting to be effective she has to position herself as 'small, envious and bad' and that she is to be blamed for what happened to her. Further, I want to argue that taking this position implies being in a disempowering and vulnerable position. This is illustrated by the following extracts where some of the women interviewed talked about their experiences of being attacked or being victimized:

Paula:

[...] if you are the victim you wonder whether you encouraged it in any way or whether you had any part in it/

Jessica:

[...] when I was nineteen I was raped by two men and I don't know whether I felt shame, just trying to think, because it was all part of what in a sense I expected that should happen to me and try to work out whether it was my fault or not and (.) I felt I was bad and that I had actually provoked something to happen, it was my fault (.) I am thinking whether it can be called shame, they were very very angry, so they were attacking me, I just wonder whether when you feel ashamed you feel that you are bad, it is difficult to work out/

Judy:

I can remember another instance actually. There was myself and other few friends were out walking in the woods and we were () younger and this man came up to us and said he wanted to go for a pee and could we showed him where to go and being young, 9 or 10 there was a sort of warning light in my

mind, but there was also curiosity because I did not know what was going on, and we knew the woods very well and he said ‘after I have gone for a pee you can go for a pee and I check that nobody is looking’ and I can remember this incredible sense of curiosity and this incredible sense of danger and threat and we just run off because we just knew that something was wrong but we did not know why and afterwards I felt quite ashamed about that because I hadn’t understood quite what was going on, and it was a sort of ‘why did we not know, why did not understand what was happening in that situation and why were we being so curious? why did we want to stay anyway?’

What is conveyed by the previous extracts is how when being attacked or abused, the women searched for their responsibility for what had happened to them. Jessica says explicitly that the attack is what she expected to happen to her and she attributed it to her being bad; exactly as Moira had. Judy’s account perhaps shows an early form of that process; she is too young to fully take on the responsibility for what happened, but nonetheless questions herself critically for her curiosity.

I want to conclude this chapter with a discursive analysis of an extract from the interview with Rita. I have selected this account because of its richness and because it contains many elements from the themes analysed so far. It is a story about a heterosexual woman being flashed at by a man while travelling on the tube at nine o’clock at night.

10.4 Rita’s Account

- 1 R: One day I felt so ashamed, I was in the tube, about 2 years ago. I am
2 shortsighted and I wasn’t wearing my contact lenses. In that compartment
3 there were only 2 women, no men, when we got to [the station] a man came
4 into the compartment and he came to where I was sitting, opposite to the
5 other lady and I had the strong feeling that he wasn’t wearing any trousers
6 and he flashed, now because I wasn’t wearing glasses or contact lenses I

- 7 wasn't sure that that was real, but the girl, I could tell, I was just thinking,
8 you know, it looks like this man is flashing, he was actually flashing, now
9 because I didn't realise immediately I didn't take my gaze away from him as
10 quickly as I should have done, but when I realized, oh my God!, and he must
11 have realized that I was looking at him, but I just couldn't tell (.) when I
12 realized I just got off and walked off, very very embarrassing, I couldn't tell
13 anybody, I was petrified even to go to the police
- 14 B: Why do you think you were embarrassed?
- 15 R: I think because it took so long to realize that he was actually flashing, I
16 should have just ignore the whole thing, but I wasn't aware (.) the
17 embarrassment, I was so ashamed I didn't even report it, because where do
18 you start, you have to describe the person (.) I definitely felt ashamed
- 19 B: what do you think would have happened?
- 20 R: well I would have had to describe the person which means that you spent so
21 long looking at them and the implication of describing a person who was
22 flashing is that you had a confrontation, although it was just eyes, it meant
23 that I stared at the person
- 24 B: are you saying that you felt ashamed because you were actually looking at
25 him
- 26 R: yes, (laugh), if I had spoken to the other girl, but we both got off and just
27 carried away not knowing what to do
28 [...] when I got home I coped by talking to my flatmate, I rang my boyfriend
29 to get it off my system, I don't know whether to call it shame or anger, for
30 me it happened at the same time, somebody imposing something on you,
31 physically nothing happened, but it something that somebody does to you,
32 you are ashamed, you are angry, you have all these feelings (.) and if I had
33 been wearing my glasses it would have been worse, because all the time I was
34 wondering "is this real?"
- 35 B: do you know why it would have felt worse wearing glasses?
- 36 R: you know when someone does something to me I try to assess if they are mad
37 or not (.) at that time of night, being a woman and travelling at that time of
38 night (9 pm) you worry that you'll get attacked (.) you have so many thing
39 going on in your mind, gosh I have escaped it could have been worse, and
40 then the anger, and then you start worrying maybe I'm travelling late and I
41 shouldn't, so many things going on in your mind (.)
- 42 B: so did you feel you had done something you shouldn't have done
- 43 R: my boyfriend said: "you shouldn't travel late, because you put yourself in this
44 position", so he made me feel guilty that I was travelling late, contributing to
45 things like that
- 46 B: as if it was your fault (.)

- 47 R: yea and then you think, God why can't I travel when I want! [...] they
48 happened together, one after the other, I felt ashamed because I didn't even
49 report it and then I felt guilty because I was travelling late and everything
50 happens at once after that and you start wondering "is it me?
51 B: so you didn't report it because you felt ashamed
52 R: yes if they had interrogated me and I hadn't felt sure about the colour of the
53 shoes...

As I have previously pointed out, this extract touches on many issues raised in previous chapters, both in the literature reviews and in the thematic decomposition. If we look at the 'shame scenario' suggested at the end of the Introduction, this extract contains many elements of it:

1) Shame is constructed as a complex, painful, emotional phenomenon, not only in terms of the various emotional responses associated to it [Rita mentions ashamed (lines 1, 17, 18, 32, 48), humiliation (line 30-32), embarrassment (lines 12, 17), guilt (49)], but also to other emotions which she experienced concurrently [fear, i.e. petrified (line 13), anger (29, 32, 40), worry (line 40), confusion, i.e. not knowing what to do (line 29)].

2) Shame can be remembered for a long time after the event, in this case two years (line 1).

3) Two sets of coping strategies are employed to deal with the experience: the first attempts to deal with the immediate situation involved withdrawing in the form of walking off (line 12) and silence (line 12, 13). Denial was suggested as a potentially more successful strategy although she did not manage to use it (line 16). The second set of strategies is resorted to later and involves confession (lines 28, 29) which further suggests that shame and guilt often are mixed.

4) There are also attempts at reparation, i.e. she would like to have been told that what happened had nothing to do with her, which would have repaired her sense of self. Unfortunately that did not happen and in fact her fears were confirmed (line 43-45).

5) It was also suggested in the shame scenario that shame has a reason and a cause, i.e. something happens that triggers the feeling (the reason), but then, in a psychodynamic framework, that event is made traumatic because it sets off unconscious, intrapsychic reactions (the cause).

In the context of this extract, the inter-psychic *reason* is the exhibitionistic act. To explain the *cause* for the intra-psychic emotional state it produced, two psychodynamic readings are possible: one is a classical Freudian reading whereby shame is the reaction-formation to Rita's voyeuristic impulses. In other words, Rita's voyeuristic impulses pressed for satisfaction (and partly succeeded), but this was followed by shame functioning as a repressing force, transforming the forbidden pleasure into its opposite: an unpleasant feeling of shame. This reading is supported by the concurrent experience of guilt for the fleeting satisfaction of her impulses. Confirming this, Rita does say that going to the police would have involved confessing that she had looked at the man's genitals (lines 21-23). The structural model adds the element of internalisation of social values through the vigilant action of the superego, but nevertheless as it has been discussed elsewhere (chapters one and six) both these readings rest on a view of the human psyche as a closed system.

Another available reading connects shame to the ideal-self formulation. There are many aspects of the ideal self that Rita failed to meet. In moral terms she failed to immediately turn away. In terms of personality she also failed, by being deeply

affected and confused instead of being sufficiently in control to ignore the man. Finally, she also felt she failed in not having gone to the police.

I want to argue that, far from being just a personal intrapsychic conflict (as the two psychoanalytic readings would construct), shame is being negotiated at many different levels and in an extremely complex way. I will now discursively analyse the extract.

The scene is set by Rita positioning herself as shameful. She says she *felt* ashamed rather than that she *was* ashamed. This could indicate that although at the level of feelings there was some shame, perhaps she did not entirely identify with it. Nevertheless this also implies that *she* experienced the shame and that the discomfort stayed with her.

The next sentence introduces us to what area the shame will relate to. We do discover later that it is about sexual exhibitionism, but Rita first focuses on herself, making a point of positioning herself as incapacitated. This does many things: firstly it tells us to expect the shame to have something to do with inadequacy and helplessness. Secondly, it positions Rita as disabled and relatively helpless. Thirdly, this statement could be functioning as a disclaimer (Wetherell and Potter 1992), counteracting something that will come later. The fact that this involves Rita (the victim), tells us that her position of victim has to be strengthened and warranted from the beginning.

Rita says that when the man flashed, she had the strong feeling he was flashing thus reducing the importance of her statement, which would have been stronger if she had said she knew it with certainty. The invitation to trust her innocence is clearly made in the following line where she says that she wasn't sure if it was real. Her being shortsighted is obviously her strong point. This, however, is contradicted by the claim that, although she could not properly see the man sitting next to her, she could see

the woman sitting opposite. This could be taken to suggest that Rita was lying and use the blurred vision as an excuse.

On the contrary, I attribute this discrepancy to Rita not trusting her judgement, therefore the other woman's expression validates her impression much more than what she saw. This is supported in lines 32-34 because if she had been wearing glasses she would have had to trust her judgement, which obviously she could not do, as she goes on to explain. When it comes to reading the other woman's expression, however, Rita has no hesitation "I could tell".

This is a very important point because it suggests that she was capable of supporting and validating the other woman's reading of the situation, i.e. that the two women were positioned as potential allies. The potential of this alliance is stated further later (line 26, 27) where Rita implies that if they had managed to talk, something else could have happened, perhaps they could have joined forces and found the strength to go to the police or at least to comfort and support each other. But this opportunity was lost and Rita is left with her own perception of what had happened which, from the beginning, is constructed as uncertain and open to attribution of blame.

In the following few lines there is a shift of attention from the man to Rita and her initial disclaimer ends up working against her. Rita says that because she couldn't see properly, she looked for longer than she should have done. Around this she constructs one of the shameful/embarrassed positions (the other being that of humiliation), around having looked at the flasher's genitals for too long (line 9, 15, 20, 21). This is where the opening of the story makes sense, because it implies that Rita only looked at his genitals because she could not see properly and she could not tell what she was looking at.

It seems that the purpose of most of the account is to prevent the reading that she had done anything to encourage or bring the event on herself. Consistent with this, she is the one who leaves the train, resorting to withdrawal and silence as defence. She explains the silence as a way of protecting herself from having to admit that she had looked at the man, further positioning herself as the shameful one and the guilty one, as she explains in more detail later. By taking this position, Rita makes the situation into a personal problem, hiding the reality that she would have found herself being interrogated and perhaps humiliated by the police. Her constant doubt about what was happening further weakens her position. However, her refusal to go to the police could also be read as a realistic reading of the situation and resistance to being further humiliated by a system which wouldn't give her a genuine chance to have a voice (Marks, 1993). Thus she chooses silence.

This extract is unusual because it does offer at least two alternative positions to being shameful and a victim. There is the position of anger, a) for having being assaulted and b) for not having the freedom of travelling when she wants to because she is a woman. The other is the possibility of joint resistance. However, the latter is aborted and the former is gravely undermined by the self-blame.

10.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have further explored some of the issues addressed in the previous chapters. In particular I have focused on some consequences of low self-esteem and feelings of unlovability and attempted a reading of these issues which goes beyond the individual experience, but reconnects them to women's position in a patriarchal society. Following on from that, I have looked at how the anger at being unfairly treated can be turned against women themselves and constructed as a positive step

of taking responsibility. Finally I have explored the disempowering effects of self-denigration, low self-esteem and of taking the shameful position in case of real attack.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

Conclusions

As stated in the Introduction, this thesis aims at an investigation of shame; in particular it aims at providing a psychoanalytic and feminist reading of women's lived experience of shame. This final chapter will serve as a summary of the thesis with accompanying reflections on what conclusions I have reached and some recommendations for further work. I also intend to use it to comment briefly on some of the epistemological issues raised by the research.

I have argued that shame is not a 'thing' out there which can be clearly defined, observed or measured like the objects of investigation in the natural sciences; nor is it exclusively the product of intrapsychic conflicts. Shame is constructed and negotiated culturally and historically, both inter and intra-psychically. Last, but not least, what we end up learning about shame through research is fundamentally affected by the epistemological framework and the methodology employed to investigate it. In other words, theoretical frameworks and the epistemological underpinnings of the instrument of investigation will construct what we see and the boundaries of where we can go in our research.

Epistemological questions run throughout this thesis and take different forms. In chapter one, for example, the question of what theoretical models either allow us or prevent us from seeing is explored in relation to Freud's concept of shame and the changes it underwent throughout the development of his metapsychology. I argued at that point that the theoretical boundaries of Freud's framework prevented him from developing an understanding of shame connected to the self: because the theory did

not provide the language necessary to make sense of certain phenomena, they became invisible. This contributed to researchers then believing that those phenomena, as far as Freudian metapsychology was concerned, did not exist.

This dynamic highlights two things: a) that language constructs reality and b), the need in research to make visible what is invisible, or has not found words to be expressed. The latter consideration directed my research toward attempting to make visible the links between women's experience of shame and wider social issues.

This is one of the main reasons why shame is of such interest to me: it is mostly invisible. The experience of shame is suffered in silence and isolation. It is a secret pain rarely shared that disempowers and undermines one's sense of self-esteem. This is why it is such a powerful means of social control, due to its capacity to regulate behaviour from within.

In this thesis I have tried to investigate how that process takes place for women and how they account for it. Going beyond the personal experience, I have tried to reconnect the participants' accounts to the historical context to which we belong; this was done from the feminist standpoint that views our patriarchal society as unequal in terms of gender.

Shame is a very complex phenomenon. I started by stating the impossibility of any simple definition of shame. Instead, I listed the shame family of feelings and attributed the problem of definition a) to the fact that people feel many different things at the same time, b) they feel, think and speak differently about the same thing at different times and c) say and think different things about the same phenomenon in different contexts. This, to me, would be a very good indication that there is no unitary thing called shame nor is there a unitary shameful subject. Furthermore, it

confirms, in the words of Harré and Secord (1972:299) that, "most human social behaviour is linguistically mediated and is thus not directly observable in the sense that a physical movement might be." These shifts, contradictions and negotiations became the object of inquiry of the discursive analysis carried out on the semi-structured interviews. In that analysis I identified five themes which I will now discuss briefly in turn.

In the first theme 'Shame and the Ideal' (chapter six), I looked at how shame is constructed within the theme of ideals and failing to meet them. I have questioned the assumption that these ideals are either 'out there' in society, or that they are a personal intrapsychic product. My starting point was that ideals are in no way 'neutral' and I explored how ideologically charged ideals affect women's lives. I have also looked at the process of self-regulation involved in taking the position of shameful.

In chapter seven I explored the theme of 'Femininity and Shame' and looked at the constructions of femininity used by the participants to explain and justify their representations of themselves as shameful. I have argued that this way of accounting functions as a practical ideology and contributes to the reproduction of female stereotypes seen as actual practices taking place in real time and real places.

In the theme 'Withdrawal as a Defence Against Shame' (chapter eight) I continued to explore the function of practical ideology in women's accounts of avoidance when presented as a protective activity to prevent exposure of their shameful self. Through a discursive analysis I have attempted to show how by positioning themselves as shameful, women can both conform and resist oppression at the same time.

The theme 'The Shameful Self behind the Façade' in chapter nine continues some of the themes explored in the previous chapter. Continuing the examination of strategies employed by the participants to protect themselves from shame, I focused on the technique of hiding behind a façade. I have explored the dualistic split used by the participants to describe themselves as having a 'true self' which is shameful and inadequate and a public self which, though competent and successful, is constructed as a 'façade'. In exploring this theme I looked at possible alternative subject positions and suggested some reasons for their neglect. I also looked at the function performed by the façade/true self split.

Finally, in chapter ten I explored the theme 'Shame of the Victim' and looked at some consequences of women taking the position of shameful as discussed in previous themes. I argued in this chapter that positioning themselves as shameful has implications for the women's sense of self and self-esteem particularly in the event of attack.

Discursive Analysis: a critique.

There are a number of limitations to the qualitative study examined in this thesis. The first is one shared with any form of discourse analysis: the findings cannot be representative (Parker and Burman 1993). The constructive nature of the analysis by definition prevents it from being representative, even though the different subject positions are nevertheless drawn from common social resources and, ultimately, the political objective of discourse analysis is in re-making the link with these wider social and historical constructions to examine the effects of their ideological action. Therefore my analysis can only be seen as a tentative, initial step in that direction.

Further research should be based on interviewing a larger number of people with the aim of exploring more in depth the various shame themes.

Another limitation of this study is that it did not pay particular attention to issues of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, as the focus here was mainly on issues of gender. All of the above are building blocks for contemporary social discrimination, hence the importance of exploring their role in the construction of the shameful subject. Some of these issues were touched on in this thesis (class in chapter ten, ethnicity and race in chapter seven), but there was no clear discussion of these issues in the analysis. This was partly due to a need for brevity and selectivity, but mainly those issues were not present in the text because they were not made part of my interview schedule from the beginning. This confirms how any research allows only a pre-selected part of reality to become visible at the expense of others. In view of this, further research should be carried out to explore experiences of shame with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and disability as their focus.

A third recommendation for further studies is connected to the clinical understanding of the experience of shame, which could explore whether the socially constructed shameful subject is taken into consideration in clinical settings or whether the exclusive study of shame as an intrapsychic affect further strengthens the ideological construction of shame as a personal issue.

Some Epistemological and Political Reflections

There are also certain epistemological issues highlighted by this research that I feel would require further investigation. For example, as discussed in chapter four, post-

structuralism rejects the notion of a reality pre-existing language and as a consequence it also rejects claims that language can access hidden meaning in the psyche of the subject (Parker and Burman 1993). This has serious implications for any attempt to simultaneously analyze a text both discursively and psychoanalytically. For example, as a discourse analyst, I repeatedly stressed that my readings did not claim any privileged insight into the participant's psyche (see chapter five). However this was problematic for a psychoanalytic reading, as I had to neglect the participants' biographies (essential to any psychoanalytic understanding), despite their continuous reference to their pasts and their discussion of shame in historical terms.

This touches on another problem which I addressed briefly in chapter nine: the relation between history and change in a modernist and post-modernist framework. I looked at how psychoanalysis is at the same time a modernist and a post-modernist approach; post-modern in the sense that it rejects the notion of a unitary subject and views the self as a constantly negotiated product, intra and inter-psychically. At the same time, it rests heavily on a notion of personal history and concepts of self-development and change, i.e. progress (Frosh 1991). And yet post-modernism abhors notions of progress and history.²⁰

These issues are of crucial importance for anyone embarking on a discursive analysis which aims at political change. In my case, however, they became central because of my problematic, multiple positioning as social-constructionist academic researcher, psychoanalytic psychotherapist and feminist. As a discourse analyst I explored the

²⁰ A similar position has been taken by Hollway (1989), who despite advocating the 'death of the subject' has maintained in her analysis the existence of a core self, a temporal continuity for the core self and the uniqueness of the individual. For a critique see Widdicombe 1992.

constructive nature of language and its role in the constitution of subjectivity, which implies acceptance of epistemological relativism.

And yet, as a woman committed to feminist struggle within a patriarchal society, and as a psychotherapist engaged in relieving pain and enhancing patients' self-development and progress, I still operate within a mainly realist, modernist framework. In my daily practice as a psychotherapist I am constantly confronted with the pain of shame in patients' 'real' existence; this has been a constant reminder of the necessity for a practical application of what we research. The tensions created by my multiple identities have often been problematic, but have ultimately been pivotal in my choice of objectives in this research and kept me anchored to my need for this research to be not just an abstract enterprise, but an attempt to contribute to some change in women's 'real' everyday existence.

In chapter nine I have aligned myself to Habermas (1987) in that I adhere to the notion of a negotiated construction of reality and self, without giving up the idea that there still exists the possibility for collective action and ideals of progress, change and transformation. It is in a similar way that I consider my identity as a feminist researcher: I believe that the category of 'woman' is neither cohesive nor unitary, but socially and politically constructed. However I also believe that there is a common experience of oppression and the possibility of challenging that oppression within the diversity of women's experiences.

However shifting and fragmented, however constructed, there is a history which has oppressed women, as there are dynamic and socially interactive ideological practices which affect the way we live on a daily basis. I believe that we are all involved and we are all implicated; we do not have a choice as to whether we are a part of history

or not. We do, however, have a choice as to whether we collaborate with these practices or oppose them.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

General: State of mind/emotional state of participant.

I would like you to tell me how things have been for you in the last 6 months.

A.SELF ESTEEM

1.General questions on participant's life

Quality of social interaction/ areas of supplies of well-being/sense of self-worth

How old are you

Do you work, study..

Do you like it, importance etc

Relationships

Friends

Interests/activities

SELF-SCALES

2. Perceived quality of life / role performance

Would you say you are very satisfied with your life, contented or dissatisfied.

2.1

Positive

In what areas do you feel your life is alright

Is there anything you would really like/dream to happen in your life?

Negative

What are the areas you don't feel satisfied with and would like to change?

3. Evaluation of self attributes

Would you say that you like yourself a lot, a little bit or not at all

Positive

What are the aspects of yourself and your personality -appearances, qualities etc.- that you like.

Are there any aspects of yourself as a woman that you like/dislike or are particularly conscious of?

-prompts on body and neediness-

Negative

What are the aspects of yourself you don't like

4. Discrepancy between ideal-self and actual self

I wonder if you could think of a situation in which you did not like yourself

4.1 Image of mental state

- Could you describe your feelings
- What kind of things did you think of yourself
- Do you wish you had behaved differently?
- How do you wish to have appeared?

Ideal self

5. Models/ideals

Some people have told me about having a secret dream about something they would like to achieve or someone they strongly admire and would like to be like
Do you have anything like that?

5.1.

What are the things you would like people to think of you

What are the things you would definitely not like people to think of you.

6. Inadequacy

Are there any areas in your life or in yourself in which you feel inadequate?

Is there any area in which you feel inadequate because you are a woman?

B. SHAME

General

People seem to associate different experiences, feelings and meanings to 'shame'; I would like to discuss this with you.

Maybe we can start from a recent situation in which you felt shame; it would be very helpful if you could tell me as much as possible about the feelings involved even if you are not sure they are exactly shame.

(The situation described by the subject should contain the elements listed in the 'shame scenario')

THE SHAME SCENARIO

- a reason and a cause
- an audience/ shaming agent(s) internal and/or external
- the affect is traumatic, although to a varying degree and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating
- the shame situation can be remembered for long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with the same intensity
- different coping strategies and/or defences are employed
- reparation is made, in reality or phantasy, through acceptance
- shame is a complex emotional state and cannot be found in isolation

(Prompts to elicit or clarify answers related to the points listed in the 'shame scenario')

1. A reason and a cause

What do you think led you to feel so ashamed?

2. Audience/shaming agent(s) internal and/or external

Who did you think would have noticed?

Was anybody there who would have noticed?

Who do you think it was that made you feel so uncomfortable?

(Bad/persecutory/critical objects)

Is there anybody you wouldn't have liked to be there..some people say "I am glad my father/mother was not there"

(Good/supportive objects)

On the contrary is there anybody you could think of that would have helped you to feel better

3. The affect is traumatic, although to a varying degree and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating

Did you think it limited you in any way?

Did you find that what was happening interfered in any way with the way you were feeling before; did it change it in any way?

Did you find that the experience interfered in any way with your thinking?

Did you find that the experience left you in any way disoriented or confused?

4. The shame situation can be remembered for long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with the same intensity

Would you say that this was a very intense feeling, on a scale of 1 to 5.

Do you think you remembered constantly

How often would this memory occur to you? (once a year/ monthly...roughly)

Would you remember with the same intensity as when it happened or you felt it changed in some other way

5. Different coping strategies and/or defences are employed/defences

Now I am going to ask you: How did you deal with that event at that time

What do you think was your way of coping with the situation?

What did you say to yourself?

What did you think of what had happened? (This often can take place after the event.)

Did you try to make yourself feel better

6. Reparation is made, in reality or phantasy, through acceptance

Is there anyway you can make yourself feel better?

What do you think in retrospect you could have done
to stop yourself from feeling

Was is there anything in that situation that helped you to feel better?

What kind of thought you found would sooth the feelings you had in the situation?

**7. Emotional profile. Shame is a complex emotional state and cannot be found
in isolation**

What was going on in your mind connected to that event which you think was linked
to feeling ashamed?

Can you describe in as much detail as possible the
feelings you had at the time.

What did you say to yourself?

Did you feel frighthned, angry, inadequate, guilty, self-conscious, humiliated,
depressed, anxious, upset, confused

What about positive feelings: Did you feel excited, happy, curious, elated?

Would you say you liked or dislike yourself at that moment?

8. Existential shame

Someone said ." I think of shame in situations when I am doubting about doing
something wrong or anxious to look stupid. In all sorts of social situation that you
don't know how to handle and being ashamed of not knowing what kind of things
to say, and feeling ashamed because they are trivial things"

Do you know what this person meant?

Is there anything in your everyday experience which you feel is reflected by this quote?

9. Self-consciousness/inadequacy

Would you say that generally you feel self-conscious and/or are there any situations that make you feel that way

Are there any areas of your life in which you feel inadequate.

Are there any situations or people that make you feel inadequate.

10. Self-esteem and gender

Do you think that the fact that you are a woman/man have an influence on the feelings we are talking about?

Are there any situations in which you feel particularly insecure or uncertain or could feel more inadequate because you are a woman ?

APPENDIX 2

Hypotheses underpinning interview questions

1. What is the correlation between self-esteem and shame?

- CONTENT

Does shame differ in people with high self-esteem and low self-esteem?

Is there a difference in the content of the shame experiences reported?

The measure of self-esteem is provided by questions

A1, A2, A3.

These question focus on how rich and satisfactory the P. perceives her life to be and how much they like or dislike themselves.

Hence people with high self-esteem will present a rich and fulfilling life, with a general sense of satisfaction about themselves and their lives.

On the contrary people with low self-esteem are likely to dislike themselves, to distrust their capacities and are likely to feel generally dissatisfied with the way they are, with their jobs, relationships etc.

(This is a descriptive and not causal definition)

Predictions

With people with high self-esteem shame will be connected to an experience which threatens morality. This experience can be described as exposing the self as they are not normally.

In other words they feel they have been caught doing something they feel is morally wrong and that would be judged wrong by society. In this experience they feel they have appear

as being in a way they do not like, but that is is not how they really are.

This I call shame experience which threatens morality.

(In Psychoanalytic terms shame functions as reaction formation)

Predictions

With people with low self-esteem shame will be connected to an experience which threatens the ego/self.

It will reflect a painful discrepancy between the way they would like to appear and the way they feel they really are.

In this case P. feels they have appeared in the way they really are: inadequate, stupid etc, and it will be accompanied by a sense of experiencing the difference between the way they are and how they would like to be.

- DEFENCES

Is there a difference in defences?

By defence I mean any operation or strategy employed by the P. to deal with any situation likely to cause distress in order to return to a state of equilibrium disrupted by the occurrence of the situation in question. Examples of defences: avoidance, denial, rationalization, projection etc. The situations I am referring to are shameful situations.

- COPING STRATEGIES

Is there a difference in the 'strategies' people employ in order to deal/cope with a shaming situation?

Do people with high self-esteem find it easier to cope and come to terms with the shame experience than people with low self-esteem?

Predictions: yes

Do they remember it for longer and with stronger intensity?

Predictions:

People with low self-esteem tend to get more affected by a shame experience, tend to remember it for longer time and with greater intensity.

Furthermore there is a lesser capacity to accept the feelings and to minimize their impact.

How do people 'recover' from a shame experience and the difficult feelings induced by it; to what do they resort to restore their sense of being 'alright'?

Predictions:

People use two sources of 'well being':

1. internal, through their 'good introjects and a sense of acceptance of their shortcomings
2. external, through important and supportive relationships and confirmation of their self-worth

I will call them narcissistic supplies or supplies of well being.

Predictions

Being the two above mentioned elements weaker in people with low self-esteem than in people with high self-esteem, I expect the former to find it more difficult to recover from a shame experience.

2. What is the correlation between Shame and Ideal Self?

The exposure to the discrepancy between Ideal-Self and actual-self produces shame and a lowering of self-esteem.

Are there similarities between mental states when people experience shame and when are faced with the discrepancy between the way they are and the way they would like to be.

Predictions:

There is a high correlation between the two:

- a. in the content of the two experiences
- b. in the feelings experienced
- c. in the person's way of relating to themselves (self-denigration, self-acceptance, self-attack)

Is there a correlation between people with very high standards, high expectations and shame, and people with much lower expectations and less rigid standards?

Predictions

People whose ideal self contains high expectations (becoming president, famous and successful people) find shame experiences more humiliating than people with lower expectation, and find them more difficult to deal with)

3. Exploratory on shame

Is it possible to make a differentiation between ideal-self/narcissistic shame and reaction formation shame?

Narcissistic shame

The self is affected (by self I mean a sense of identity the subject feels describes them quite accurately). The shameful situation is preceded by positive feelings (excited expectations, well-being) -whether produced by actions or daydreaming/phantasies - followed by a sudden collapse of self-esteem and confidence.

One of the feelings expressed more often by the S. is the feeling of humiliation.

In Psychoanalytic terms I would describe it as the S. having received a narcissistic blow.

EX: X. has invited the girl of his dreams to a competition. Confident to win he intends to impress her.

In front of everybody he trips on his shoe laces.

Ego-ideal/ unlovability shame

Again the self is affected in such a way that, following the experience, the S. undergoes some reassessment of him/herself.

The experience is preceded by negative feelings (fear and anxiety of 'getting it wrong' or 'appearing stupid') and leaves the S. feeling unacceptable and unlovable, as well as stupid, inadequate etc.

At the core of this experience there is a feeling of contempt and dislike for what the person is and a strong desire to be somebody else, or deeply different.

In Psychoanalytic terms I would describe this experience as connected to a discrepancy between what the person really is (actual self) and what the person would like to be (ideal self)

Ex.

Shame as reaction-formation

This type of shame is more connected to 'social shame', i.e. to either actions or thoughts which are intimate and private and are not normally performed in public (which society would consider as wrong).

These include sexual activities, the exposure of the body, performing of bodily functions etc.

Ex. S. discovers at the end of the working day that she has been walking around with her skirt caught in her knickers.

In Psychoanalytic terms in these experiences shame draws boundaries between private/public and is strictly connected with what is socially acceptable.

The name reaction-formation signifies the function of shame as painful and distressing feeling in preventing people from crossing these boundaries, something that is unconsciously desired.

Is there a collapse of self-esteem during a shame experience?

Phenomenology

What are the essential factors in the phenomenology of shame? (whether there is always an audience involved, whether the experience is traumatic etc)

The 'shame scenario' provides a list of factors which I think are part of most shame experiences I want to explore which, if any, appear more frequently and if there is a correlation with different types of shame.

Prediction:

I assume that a shaming situation contains:

THE SHAME SCENARIO

- a reason and a cause
- an audience/ shaming agent(s) internal and/or external
- the affect is traumatic, although to a varying degree and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating
- the shame situation can be remembered for long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with the same intensity
- different coping strategies and/or defences are employed
- reparation is made, in reality or phantasy, through acceptance

GENDER DIFFERENCE

Is there a gender difference in terms of types of shame, defences, experience and type of shame?

If so, what does it consist of?

APPENDIX 3

Instructions for raters

General

STATE OF MIND/EMOTIONAL STATE OF SUBJECT

Get a general feeling of quality of S's life, a sense of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, relevance of people, activities, interests.

Make a list of adjectives and, if possible, group them.

(Later each subject will be rated on a scale of 1 to 5 for each group)

SELF ESTEEM

1.

General questions on S's life

QUALITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION/ AREAS OF SUPPLIES OF
WELL-BEING/SENSE OF SELF-WORTH

Score the questions in this group on a scale of 1 to 5.

Take into consideration not only the actual answer of yes or no, but the relevance it seems to have in S's life.

Score 1 if the answer is 'no'

Ex:

"Are you in a relationship?"

"No"

Score 5 if the answer is 'yes' and it sounds like it is a very important area or an area connected to very positive feelings.

Ex:

"Do you have friends?"

"I have a large number of friends and acquaintances. My friends are very important to me."

Score 3 if there is obvious ambivalence attached to the answer

Score 2 if the answer is 'yes', but there are no really good feelings attached to that area, but on the contrary some sadness or dissatisfaction or regret is attached to it.

ex:

"Do you like your job? Is it important to you?"

"Yes, not a lot, but yes...I don't love it. It is important because it pays the bills, it is my source of income, so in that sense it is important."

SELF-SCALES

General guidelines

Please bear in mind that since all the questions under 2 and 3 relate to evaluation of self attributes and performance, one would expect some overlap between all these scales.

The areas which keep being mentioned are obviously very important to S. and we can take to represent their value system.

Mark the areas for a later comparison with areas of shame.

There are two elements to be taken into consideration in this question: what the S. actually says and what transpires from the interview. Rate according to what you think they actually feel rather than to what they say they feel or think.

Mark the statements and group them in areas.

Count the statement.

Ex:

2.

PERCEIVED QUALITY OF LIFE/ROLE PERFORMANCE

Score on a scale of 1 to 5

The emphasis in this scale is on a lack of self-acceptance - that is the S. unhappiness or dissatisfaction with her/himself and the kind of person s/he is.

Mark the statements of unhappiness about the kind of person the S. perceives her/himself to be. Count the statements.

Group the statements in areas; also pay attention to the overall feeling and to the intensity of feelings according to the different areas.

It is very important in rating this question that the feelings of dissatisfaction with the self presupposes the existence of an ideal self(what the S. would like to be) against which the subject is comparing her/himself.

3.

EVALUATION OF SELF ATTRIBUTE

3.1

Score using a scale from 1 to 5

3.2

Mark and count all the positive and negative statements S. makes about her/himself. Take into consideration the intensity of the statement and the relevance in S's life of the area mentioned.

Score on a scale from 1 to 5, giving 3 if the negative and positive statements are similar in number, intensity and related to areas of equal importance, 5 if the positive statements greatly outnumber the negative, 1 in the opposite situation.

Make a note of areas and feelings that seem particularly important.

4.

The content gives a picture of the areas in which the discrepancy is experienced as more wounding and more connected to S. value system.

4.1

From this question you will get the range of feelings S. feels when faced with a discrepancy between what s/he would like to be and what s/he really is.

The feelings described during this process of 'self-evaluation' will give the S.'s mental state when faced with the discrepancy.

Please make a list of feelings

5.

IDEAL SELF

Look for sentences like: I should be do this, I would like to be.., I wish I was .., I wish I could do

or for values or qualities mentioned as positive and important both in herself and admired people

(I should be able able to do that..because it is professional

SHAME

- a reason and a cause
- an audience/ shaming agent(s) internal and/or external
- the affect is traumatic, although to a varying degree and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating
- the shame situation can be remembered for long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with the same intensity
- different coping strategies and/or defences are employed
- reparation is made, in reality or phantasy, through acceptance
 - shame is a complex emotional state and cannot be found in isolation

The above are the dimensions you are asked to score.

For each of these dimensions you should ask yourself the following question:

"Does this dimension appear in the example given by the subject?"

Generally you should be able to extract this information from the vignette; if not the prompts should help you to decide whether the answer is yes or no.

Questions 1., 2., 3., are a 'yes' 'no' questions.

The hypothesis which we want to test is whether and how often the various dimensions appear in shame situations.

Score 1 if that particular situation applies, 0 if it does not.

Please fill the information in the list provided underneath; but please read beforehand the information provided in the following page.

1a. What was the reason(s)

1b. What was the cause(s)

2. Was there an audience/ shaming agent(s) internal and/or external (yes/no)
(if you feel that both apply please specify)

3. The affect is traumatic, although to a varying degree and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating
(yes/no)

Please rate from 1 to 5/9

4. The shame situation can be remembered for long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with the same intensity

(yes/no)

4a. Was the situation remembered for long time? Please rate from 1 to 5/9

4b. Were the associated feelings re-experienced with the same intensity? Please rate from 1 to 5/9

5. Different coping strategies and/or defences are employed
(yes/no)

Please make a list of what you thought were the strategies and the defences employed

6.Reparation is made, in reality or phantasy, through acceptance

(yes/no)

7.Shame is a complex emotional state and cannot be found in isolation

(yes/no)

If yes, please make a list of the other feelings the S. had during the shameful experience.

1.Reason and cause

For reason I mean the actual event that brought about the feelings; while the cause presupposes a deeper, unconscious conflict.

Ex:

Please note that although the reason is always present and easy to identify, the cause might have to be inferred from what the S. says.

In rating this question you should ask yourself the question "What caused the S. to feel the way s/he did?"

2.Audience/shaming agent(s) internal and/or external

The majority of shameful situations take place in front of other people; however even when this is not the case the experience involves in some way an audience, sometimes experienced as a critical/attacking voice.

3.The affect is traumatic, although to a varying degree and can be experienced as momentarily incapacitating

In rating this question ask yourself the following questions:

How did the S. react to this experience: was s/he affected to the extent of being in any way impaired (i.e.found it difficult to think, to speak, to extricate him/herself from the situation)

Was the S. very distressed, confused, disoriented by the experience?

Give 3 examples and rating (5 or 9 point scale?)

4. The shame situation can be remembered for long time afterwards and the related affects can be re-experienced with the same intensity

This question is split into two :

4a. how intense was the feeling during the actual experience

4b. how often and intensely the affects would come back when the experience was remembered

In rating this part of the question ask yourself: "How long was the S. affected by the experience? If you felt that s/he forgot almost immediately and when remembering it s/he did not find it traumatic, but even perhaps amusing, then the score would be low.

If on the contrary the S. repeatedly remembered the experience and would re-experience the associated affects with the same intensity (i.e. some people feel themselves blush or sweating at the recollection of the event), then the score would be high.

5. Different coping strategies and/or defences are employed/defences

People react in various ways to shameful situations; we can divide the reactions in two groups:

1. the immediate strategy employed to deal with the situation while it is happening (i.e. some people need to physically leave, others pretend that anything has happened and carry on as normal, others try to divert the observer's attention by doing something else, for instance talk incessantly, some laugh often pretending of finding it amusing, some get angry etc)

2. As well as the above people also do something psychically to deal with their feelings, as it were to 'defend' themselves from them if they find these feelings too overwhelming or difficult to deal with.

This type of strategy is more difficult to identify because it happens unconsciously. You might find that some people are capable to look back and identify a particular defence mechanisms they adopted; but more often you will have to infer them from what the S. says.

This is a list of the most frequently used 'defence mechanisms'

6.Reparation is made, in reality or phantasy, through acceptance

You might find that people talk to themselves while thinking back to a shaming situation. Please focus on what kind of thought they have or things they say to themselves that made them feel better about the situation.

An example of what I mean by 'acceptance' are thoughts like "It o.k." or "It is not the end of the world", "There was nothing else you could have done".

The assumption is that this kind of thoughts is very important to counteract the critical/attacking thoughts like "How can you be so stupid!" or "You really made a fool of yourself!" etc.

If you feel that the S. made him/herself feel better by thinking 'reparation' thought tick (yes)

7.Emotional profile. Shame is a complex emotional state and cannot be found in isolation

Shame is a complex emotional state, and cannot be found in isolation but rather connected to many other emotion.

The aim of this question is to identify the feelings that more frequently appear in connection with shame, but also what type of feelings come up more for different types of people.

Please make a list.

APPENDIX 4

Section of interview with Paula.

1 B. [...]Do you think there are things you wouldn't feel ashamed of if you were a
2 man, or it doesn't make a difference?

3 uhm, I suppose the obvious thing for a woman would be sex, feeling of dirtiness, but
4 I don't think I have ever felt that way, I think 20 years ago that example would have
5 applied more to women to men...

6 B. What example?

7 P. sex, before marriage because of the prohibitions and attitudes to men and women
8 that it was a man's gain and woman's shame, no I can't think of things they would
9 relate to me but wouldn't apply to men. I am thinking about being a victim of some
10 sort, but it is the situation that goes behind it [...] I met him again and when I asked
11 him if he remembered he looked as ashamed as I did\

12 B. What does a ashamed person look like?

13 P. I think by defences, a refusal to face up to it, that you don't want to talk about it,
14 to look at it...

15 B. face up..to do with the face maybe?

16 P. yes, I think that you blank out, see no evil, hear no evil, it makes you look as if
17 you didn't have a clue, about not looking\

18 B. you were saying about being a victim..

19 P. yes I was thinking that sometimes when you are the victim of a crime you feel the
20 shame instead the perpetrator of the crime, but then again I think because of the lack
21 of control, but then is difficult, because if you are the victim you wonder whether
22 you encouraged it in any way or whether you had any part in it

23 B. yes other women have come up with this kind of thought about being attacked,
24 sexually attacked or raped.

25 P. but if the definition is right then it wouldn't fit, because often when people talk
26 about shame they talk about whether their clothes were provocative, which presumes
27 some kind of control, but again is not known control, it is unwittingly

28 [...]

29 B. Now, I would like to ask you few more questions, to get some general ideas.
30 Some people have different ways of reacting to shame situations: some people
31 withdraw from the situation try to make themselves invisible, others react becoming
32 more challenging. How do you feel you react?

33 P. running away, in all sorts of ways, either physically or as a youngster trying to
34 make myself as small as possible, trying to disappear...

APPENDIX 5

Sample of coding of semi-structured interview

- 3-5 sex before marriage, "man's gain, woman's shame"
- 9 no difference between man and woman
- 14-15 DEFENCES. Intrinsic in shame: face
- 17-18 DEFENCES: blank out (see no evil, hear no evil)
- 20-24 shame of the victim: the victim feels the shame instead of the perpetrator. She thinks because of lack of control.
IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN: one (I think she is referring to a woman) wonders whether she has done something to encourage it, or had any part in it.

IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN: (talking about rape and sexual assault), women wonder whether their clothes were provocative. Paula, however, does not seem to connect this to problematic issues in women sexuality, but instead she connects it to clothing per se, which she thinks are under women's control. This she uses to question whether the shame felt by the victim can properly be called shame, since her definition of shame is of something unwitting.

However when I suggested that perhaps the shame has something to do with "...something in you that brought it upon your self..", (implying that clothing is only an expression of that) she agrees.

NB, THIS APPEARS IN OTHER INTERVIEWS

37-39 DEFENCES/COPING STRATEGIES: running away, both physically and "...as a yongster trying to make myself as small as possible, trying to disappear."
This is very important, it connects with
1. existential shame, (women physically and mentally disappearing from situation which could expose to shame) and with
2. women and their bodies particularly at the onset of puberty, trying to take as little space as possible.
Connects to bodies, eating, needs.

APPENDIX 6

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTION

- | | |
|----------|---|
| B | stands for Bruna. It refers to what I said in the interview. |
| X | stands for the initial of the participant's name (e.g. P stands for Paula) |
| (.) | indicates a pause. |
| [...] | indicates that part of the transcript has been omitted |
| (laughs) | indicates that the participants laughed or giggled at that point. |
| () | brackets containing a blank space indicate that the interview was inaudible at that point. |
| () | brackets surround explanations which are not part of the transcript but are added to clarify the meaning of an utterance (e.g. "It (shame) feels like..") |

... indicate that the end of a sentence has been left suspended to indicate either doubt or invitation for me to respond or prompt.

\ indicates the end of a sentence.

Sounds like 'ahm', 'uhmm', 'ehm' are transcribed phonetically.

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